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Adaptation from Novels into Films:  
A Study of Six Examples, with an Accompanying Screenplay and Self-analysis

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## **Abstract.**

This thesis consists of two primary components: a study of six novels and their respective adaptations into popular commercial films, and my attempt at writing a partial screenplay adaptation of my own previously written novel fragment. I have intentionally chosen to focus upon literary works written in English in the latter half of the twentieth century: they range from the middle 1950s (Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*) to the early 1990s (Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho*). Their filmic adaptations range from the late 1960s (John Frankenheimer's *The Fixer*) to the early twenty first century (Mary Harron's *American Psycho*). I have specifically focused upon relatively recent works – both literary and filmic – so as to attain some degree of chronological, and thus aesthetic, homogeneity in the examples I have studied. Otherwise, the thesis would have been too unwieldy and disparate if I had of included both Classical and Postmodern prose works, or films from both the early twentieth century and early twenty first century.

I believe my own screenplay fragment, *Eleven A'Bier Place*, and the novel fragment from which it is adapted, share some thematic concerns with at least some of the novels and films which I have studied in the thesis. The partial screenplay adaptation I have written references contemporary media in a similar way to *American Psycho*; it focuses upon drug-crazed criminals as in *A Clockwork Orange* and *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*; it depicts the descent into insanity like *The Shining*. However, it is very much my own work. As far as I can recall I had no specific literary or cinematic precursors in mind when I began the project, although undoubtedly there exist texts which have strongly influenced me in this regard.

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### **Preface.**

To begin with I would like to thank my mother, Brenda Rose Shepherd, for her unwavering support and assistance throughout the writing of this thesis (and indeed, throughout my entire time spent at university). Without her help and encouragement the completion of this thesis would certainly not have been possible.

I would also like to thank Professor Norman Simms, the supervisor of this thesis and also of my Honours Degree in which I wrote part of the novel fragment which is used in this thesis. He has consistently provided me with an intelligent and helpful critique of my writing, and to him I extend my sincere gratitude.

Additionally, my gratitude is extended to my family and friends who have assisted me in many different ways during the writing of this thesis. Your assistance has not gone unnoticed or unappreciated.

I have now been studying for seven years or so, which included a previous Masters thesis in Media Studies. Hopefully the skills I acquired from studying film for that degree have been displayed to some extent in this thesis as well. The writing of a thesis requires the utilisation of a wide variety of abilities, and it is my hope that at least some of these have been displayed herein.

## **Chapter One: Introduction.**

Since the beginning of cinema in the late nineteenth century adaptations of novels and plays have constituted a significant amount of the medium's output: in its earliest infancy plays especially made up the vast majority of its subject matter. As James M. Welsh states in the opening to his and Peter Lev's *The Literature/Film Reader: Issues in Adaptation*:

After a century of cinema, movies have changed substantially, both technologically and stylistically, but after a hundred years, mainstream cinema is still telling and retelling stories, and most of those stories are still being (or have been) appropriated from literary or dramatic sources, as much as 85 per-cent by some calculations and accounts. Adaptation has always been central to the process of filmmaking since almost the beginning and could well maintain its dominance into the cinema's second century.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the "great" films, both commercially and critically, have been adapted from literary sources: *Nosferatu* (F. W. Murnau, 1922) and *Dracula* (Tod Browning, 1931), both adapted (the former extremely loosely) from Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), *Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1931) from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939) from Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936), *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) from Robert Bloch's *Psycho* (1959), the James Bond films (Various, 1962-) from Ian Fleming's Bond novels (1953-), *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972) from Mario Puzo's *The Godfather* (1969), *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (Peter Jackson, 2001-3) from J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (1954-5) – the list could continue almost *ad infinitum*. Curiously however, the degree of critical attention paid at an academic level to this particular phenomenon has been exceedingly low, and what attention has been paid often focuses upon the same points of reference: points which Imelda Whelehan succinctly addresses in the opening chapter to her and Deborah Cartmell's *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text* (1999)<sup>2</sup>. These include the similarity between the Polish-born

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh, James M. & Peter Lev (eds), *The Literature/Film Reader: Issues of Adaptation* Scarecrow, Lanham (MD), 2007 p.xiii

British writer Joseph Conrad's comment in the 1897 preface to his *The Nigger of the Narcissus* in which he wrote that his primary aim was to make the reader "see", and American filmmaker D. W. Griffith's assertion that, 'the task I'm trying to achieve is above all to make you see.'; Russian filmmaker and theorist Sergei Eisenstein's influential essay 'Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today (1944)' <sup>3</sup> in which he posits an intertextual link between Englishman Charles Dicken's novel *Oliver Twist* (1838) and the films of Griffith through the device of montage; Russian writer Leo Tolstoy's enthusiastic comment of 1908 regarding the remarkable possibilities cinema could develop through its effect upon literature, and English writer Virginia Woolf's decidedly less than enthusiastic comment in regard to cinema in her 1926 essay 'The Cinema'; George Bluestone's important examination of cinematic adaptation entitled *Novels into Film* (1957) <sup>4</sup>.

Although it is now more than half a century since the initial publication of Bluestone's book, I will nevertheless discuss aspects of its argument during the course of this thesis, for it is unquestionably a groundbreaking text within the field of cinematic studies: it essentially comprised the first major study of literary-to-cinematic adaptation in the English language (I will be studying English language texts and primarily English language theorists in this thesis – while theorists including Sergei Eisenstein, André Bazin and Béla Balázs had previously discussed the issue of adaptation, but never in comparable depth and with similar sophistication). Additionally, Bluestone managed to avoid the pitfall which has besieged many an intertextual critic: namely, the "fidelity" trap. A whole host of academic scholars have fallen prey to spouting the simplistic argument that an original novel is superior to the

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<sup>2</sup> Cartmell, Deborah & Imelda Whelehan (eds), *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text* Routledge, London, 1999 pp.4-7

<sup>3</sup> Eisenstein, Sergei, 'Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today (1944)' in *Film Form* (trans. by Jay Leyda) Harcourt Brace Jovanovic, n.p (1977, 1949)

<sup>4</sup> Bluestone, George, *Novels into Film* University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973 (1957)



adapted film based purely upon the criterion that the film was not “faithful” to the novel’s narrative, and is therefore inherently inferior. As Brian McFarlane states in his *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (1996), ‘discussion of adaptation has been bedeviled by the fidelity issue.’<sup>5</sup> Robert Stam addresses this issue at some length in his *Literature through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation* (2005)

The traditional language of criticism of filmic adaptations of novels...has often been extremely judgmental, proliferating in terms that imply that film has performed a disservice to literature. Terms such as “infidelity,” “betrayal,” “deformation,” “violation,” “vulgarization,” “bastardization,” and “desecration” proliferate, with each word carrying its specific charge of opprobrium. Despite the variety of the accusations, their drift always seems to be the same – the book was better.

The notion of “fidelity” does, admittedly, contain its grain of truth. When we say an adaptation has been “unfaithful” to the original, the very violence of the term gives expression to the intense disappointment we feel when a film adaptation fails to capture what we see as the fundamental narrative, thematic, and aesthetic features of its literary source. The notion of fidelity gains its persuasive force from our sense that (a) some adaptations **do** fail to “realize” what we most appreciated in the source novels; (b) some adaptations **are** indeed better than others; and (c) some adaptations miss at least some of the salient features of their sources. But the mediocrity of some adaptations, and the partial persuasiveness of “fidelity,” should not lead us to endorse fidelity as a methodological principal. Indeed, it is questionable whether strict fidelity is even **possible**. An adaptation is **automatically** different and original due to the change of medium.<sup>6</sup>

This final sentence especially is instructive as adaptation, by its very nature, involves a process of change and modification in order to suit a new or different purpose: in this case, the transition from one medium, prose, to another, film (I will not be analysing adaptations from plays, poems or short stories in this thesis). André Bazin was certainly one of the

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<sup>5</sup> McFarlane, Brian, *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*  
Clarendon, Oxford, 1996 p.8

<sup>6</sup> Stam, Robert, *Literature through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation*  
Blackwell, Malden (MA), 2005 pp.3-4

earliest scholars to directly address this issue when he wrote that, 'A novel is a unique synthesis whose molecular equilibrium is automatically affected when you tamper with its form.'<sup>7</sup> I will be addressing the issues involved in this transition in some depth during the course of this thesis, but almost needless to say there is necessarily a metamorphosis of at least some (generally most) of the narrative, thematic, and aesthetic components of any prose work when it is adapted into film. As Brian McFarlane wrote in his essay, 'It Wasn't Like that in the Book...',

I suspect there is a yearning for fidelity, not just among those with a literary training, but among quite wide sectors of the filmgoing public, without any real concern for how much fidelity is either possible or desirable – or what it might mean. And such thinking begs the question that there is such a thing as the “true” or fixed meaning for a literary text – or any sort of text for that matter.<sup>8</sup>

Or as Denise Faithfull wrote in her article, 'Adaptations/Variations',

Despite the various approaches available, critical and other audiences frequently demand that the film be 'faithful' to the original text, and unfortunately film-makers too often oblige. Thus, for example, Jane Campion, in her adaptation of *The Portrait of a*

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<sup>7</sup> Bazin, André, 'Adaptation, or the Cinema as Digest' in *Esprit* 16, No. 146 July 1948 pp.32-40, reprinted in *Bazin at Work: Major Essays & Reviews from the Forties & Fifties* (trans. from the French by Alain Piette & Bert Cardullo) Routledge, New York, 1997 p.41

<sup>8</sup> McFarlane, Brian, 'It Wasn't Like that in the Book...' in James M. Welsh & Peter Lev's (eds) *The Literature/Film Reader: Issues in Adaptation* Scarecrow, Lanham (MD), 2007 p.6

*Lady*, admitted that she found adapting 'James's novel for the screen ... at times scary'<sup>9</sup> because of her awareness of audience expectations of fidelity.<sup>10</sup>

On a humorous note, James Naremore in the introduction to his *Film Adaptation* wrote,

Unfortunately, most discussions of adaptation in film can be summarized by a *New Yorker* cartoon that Alfred Hitchcock once described to François Truffaut: two goats are eating a pile of film cans, and one goat says to the other, "Personally, I liked the book better."<sup>11</sup>

Merely because a novel constitutes the original text, coupled with the fact that literature has enjoyed a far longer and thus considerably more productive history than cinema, provides no automatic guarantee that a novel is superior to its film version. In fact, there has long existed an adage within cinematic circles that "a great book often makes a poor film, but a poor book often makes a great film". Greg Jenkins, in the opening paragraph of his *Stanley Kubrick and the Art of Adaptation: Three Novels, Three Films* (1997), quotes Richard Corliss thus: 'Adapting a best-seller for the movies is like carving flesh down to the bone. You keep the skeleton, then apply rouge and silicone until the creature looks human.'<sup>12</sup>. Although Jenkins believes that this may often be inaccurate, it nevertheless also belies some

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<sup>9</sup> Ciment, Michel, 'A Voyage of Self-Discovery: Interview with Jane Campion', in Raffaele Caputo & Geoff Burton's, *Second Take: Australian Film-makers Talk* Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, 1999 p.81.

<sup>10</sup> Faithfull, Denise, 'Adaptations/Variations' in *Australian Screen Education* Australian Teachers of Media, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2002 p.1

<sup>11</sup> Naremore, James, *Film Adaptation*

The Athlone Press, London, 2000 p.2

<sup>12</sup> Corliss, Richard, 'The Wrong Arm of the Law' in *Time* 5<sup>th</sup> July 1993 p.58 Quoted in Greg Jenkins' *Stanley Kubrick and the Art of Adaptation: Three Novels, Three Films* McFarland, Jefferson (NC), 1997 p.1

truth. The reasons for this particular phenomenon are potentially manifold: a great book (or, especially, a bestseller) may be made into a film for purely commercial reasons, and thus result in a piece of lightweight, cynically-motivated *dreck*; a skilled, ambitious filmmaker may see in a poorly received or poorly written novel enough visual potential to make a great film: however, I think Bluestone comes closest to addressing the root cause of why this may be so when he writes,

What happens...when the filmist undertakes the adaptation of a novel, given the inevitable mutation, is that he does not convert the novel at all. What he adapts is a kind of paraphrase of the novel – the novel viewed as raw material.<sup>13</sup>

This perhaps suggests that, while many a filmmaker will treat a classic work of literature as sacrosanct ('Faithful adaptors tend to favour the long-held view that 'literature' is 'better' than cinema, and therefore it is necessary, when adapting, to advantage the source rather than the film based upon it.'<sup>14</sup> according to Denise Faithfull) and thus attempt to make a "faithful" adaptation of the work – ignoring the fact that a film adaptation must inevitably add, remove and alter aspects of the novel in order to make a successful film – when it comes to either a poor or mediocre novel a filmmaker is often much more willing to alter aspects of the text during the conversion process into film.

William Fadiman maintained strenuously in 1965 that to judge an adaptation purely as it relates to its source is "irresponsible". No film, he insisted, should be mistaken for a novel in

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<sup>13</sup> Bluestone, George, *Novels into Film* University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973 (1957) p.62

<sup>14</sup> Faithfull, Denise, 'Adaptations/Variations' p.1

celluloid guise. Cinema is, after all, a distinct medium, and “whether it improves or impairs the original material, it does so within its own conventions”<sup>15</sup>.<sup>16</sup>

Whelehan discusses the transmogrification that occurs and the tripartite possibilities that may be adopted when a novel is adapted into film when she states that,

Wagner (in his *The Novel and the Cinema*<sup>17</sup>) is perhaps one of the first commentators to identify three types of adaptation: transposition – a novel ‘directly given on screen’; commentary – ‘where an original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect’; and analogy (e.g. a film that shifts the action of the fiction forward in time or otherwise changes its essential context; analogy goes further than shifting a scene or playing with the end, and must transplant the whole scenario so that little of the original is identifiable).<sup>18</sup>

Examples of transpositions include the various BBC versions of classic texts such as those of Jane Austen and Charles Dickens, which attempt to be exceedingly faithful to the novels; commentaries include a number of the films I will examine during this essay, including *American Psycho* (Mary Harron, 2000), *A Clockwork Orange* (Stanley Kubrick, 1971), *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (Terry Gilliam, 1998), *The Fixer* (John Frankenheimer, 1968) *The Shining* (Kubrick, 1980) and both Stanley Kubrick’s (1962) and Adrian Lyne’s (1997) versions of *Lolita*; examples of analogies may include *Clueless* (Amy Heckerling, 1995), which sets Jane Austen’s quintessentially English novel *Emma* (1816) in

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<sup>15</sup> Fadiman, William, ‘But Compared to the Original’ in *Films and Filming* February 1965 pp.21-3 quoted in Greg Jenkins’ *Stanley Kubrick and the Art of Adaptation: Three Novels, Three Films* McFarland, Jefferson (NC), 1997 p.11

<sup>16</sup> Faithfull, Denise, ‘Adaptations/Variations’ p.1

<sup>17</sup> Wagner, G., *The Novel and the Cinema*

Associated University Presses, Cranbury (NJ), 1975 pp.222-3

<sup>18</sup> Cartmell, Deborah & Imelda Whelehan (eds), *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text* p.8

1990s Los Angeles, or *Eyes Wide Shut* (Kubrick, 1999), which sets Arthur Schnitzler's Viennese novella *Dream Story* (*Traumnovelle*) (1926) in contemporary New York City.

I will be examining so-called “commentaries” in this essay as I believe they provide the greatest degree of interest in regard to the topic of adaptation: transpositions are generally too “sycophantic” in respect to the original texts to be truly noteworthy, while analogies differ to such an extent from their source material that often the task of isolating and examining their similarities and differences becomes not so much an intertextual exercise but rather a sort of aesthetic wild goose chase, i.e., far too much importance can often be placed upon the most minute and ultimately insignificant of details. Thus, I will be studying a select number of English language films – and the novels from which they are derived – that include both a significant amount of narrative, structural and thematic detail from their precursor texts, while at the same time altering these aspects to the extent that it is impossible to claim that the scriptwriters and directors have adopted a “filmmaking by numbers” approach, i.e. that they have blatantly and shamelessly created a transposition of the original text.

Bluestone makes an interesting point in *Novels into Film* which alludes to this subject when discussing *Wuthering Heights* (William Wyler, 1939). He writes:

...there is (a) group...which bears analysis, the type of alteration which results from what might be called the principle of Hollywood Aristotelianism. According to this always operative, rarely articulated principle, all elements of the film – spectacle, diction, character, and certainly thought – must be subordinated to plot, the prime arbiter.<sup>19</sup>

As Bluestone illustrates, the inherent problem with many transpositions is that they adhere stringently to the plot of the novel from which they are derived, yet of course the plot was never designed to convey images upon the eye, but rather only to convey images upon the mind's eye. Thus Bluestone produces what I believe to be one of – perhaps the most – important paragraphs in his book:

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<sup>19</sup> Bluestone, *Novels into Film* p.103

Both novel and film are time arts, but whereas the formative principle in the novel is time, the formative principle in the film is space. Where the novel takes its space for granted and forms its narrative in a complex of time values, the film takes its time for granted and forms its narrative in arrangements of space. Both film and novel create the illusion of psychologically distorted time and space, but neither destroys time or space. The novel renders the illusion of space by going from point to point in time; the film renders time by going from point to point in space. The novel tends to abide by, yet explore, the possibilities of psychological law; the film tends to abide by, yet explore, the possibilities of physical law.<sup>20</sup>

When a screenwriter and director adapt a novel into a film they are taking a text which - while it does of course exist in physical space as an entity but not as a narrative - is constructed within a framework of time, i.e., chronologically rather than spatially organised. They then transform it into a text which -- while it exists within time -- is arranged according to spatial principals. Another important film scholar, Jean Mitry, also dealt with this dilemma in a similar manner when he wrote that,

Time in the novel is constructed with words. In the cinema it is constructed with actions. The novel *creates* a world while the cinema *puts us in the presence* of a world which it organizes according to a certain continuity. *The novel is a narrative which organizes itself in a world; the film, a world which organizes itself in a narrative.*<sup>21</sup>

Both Bluestone's and Mitry's preceding comments, when arranged together, should go some way to indicating just how different these two aesthetic objects – the novel and the film – actually are, and as a result highlight the immense difficulties facing screenwriters and directors who wish to make successful and intellectually challenging adaptations. 'In 1951 and 1952, Lester Asheim published a series of four articles on adaptation, all of them rooted

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<sup>20</sup> Bluestone, *Novels into Film* p.61

<sup>21</sup> Mitry, Jean, 'Remarks on the Problem of Cinematic Adaptation' (trans. Richard

Dyer) in *The Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Languages Association* (4) (1971) pp.7-8

<sup>21</sup> Jenkins, *Stanley Kubrick and the Art of Adaptation* pp.13-4

in his 1949 doctoral dissertation.’<sup>22</sup> In the fourth of these articles, entitled ‘From Book to Film: Summary’,

...he (i.e. Lester Asheim) brought forth an extraordinary catalog of 39 principals, extending over six classifications, that affect how, what, and sometimes why adaptive changes are instituted. The classifications impinge on technology (a verbal approach must be converted into a visual one), artistry (plot is given more weight than character or philosophical nuance), audience limitations (a film audience is flatly assumed to have a lower level of comprehension than a literary audience), the star system (characters played by stars are given greater salience in the film than in the novel), societal pressures (violence and sex normally get reduced), and fidelity (the leading plot line is usually retained).<sup>23</sup>

It is for such reasons as these that I will examine three adaptations (*A Clockwork Orange*, *Lolita* and *The Shining*) directed by Stanley Kubrick, for I believe that he belongs to a small, elite group of twentieth century film directors (a group which also includes such luminaries as Alfred Hitchcock, James Ivory, Akira Kurosawa and Martin Scorsese) who have consistently created intellectually stimulating and entertaining adaptations of literary works.

In addition to his three films I will be studying, Kubrick has made a number of other important adaptations, among them *Paths of Glory* (1957) from Humphrey Cobb’s *Paths of Glory* (1935), *Spartacus* (1960) from Howard Fast’s *Spartacus* (1951), *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) from Arthur C. Clarke’s novel of the same year, *Barry Lyndon* (1975) from William Makepeace Thackeray’s *The Luck of Barry Lyndon* (1844), *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) from Gustav Hasford’s *The Short-Timers* (1979) and *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999). The choice of source material for his adaptations is telling: all three films of his I will examine are derived from one of - if not in fact the best - novels by three of the twentieth century’s great literary

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<sup>22</sup> Asheim, Lester, ‘From Book to Film: Summary’ in *The Quarterly of Film Radio, and Television* 6 (1952) pp.259-69 quoted in Greg Jenkins’ *Stanley Kubrick and the Art of Adaptation*

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.* p.14



talents. To my knowledge there has not been another major adaptation of an Anthony Burgess novel, while the only other Nabokov adaptation that I am aware of (other than of course Adrian Lyne's 1997 version of *Lolita*) is *The Luzhin Defence* (Marleen Gorris, 2000), based upon his *Zashchita Luzhina (The Defense)* (1939). However, Stephen King's oeuvre is a whole different story, so to speak. His novels have potentially given rise to the largest number of cinematic adaptations of any twentieth century writer: *Carrie* (Brian de Palma, 1976), *Christine* (John Carpenter, 1983), *Cujo* (Lewis Teague, 1983), *Firestarter* (Mark L. Lester, 1984), *Pet Sematary* (Mary Lambert, 1989), *Hearts in Atlantis* (Scott Hicks, 2001) – this is only a small fragment of the complete list, not to mention the host of made-for-TV-movies such as *The Tommyknockers* (John Power, 1993) and *The Shining* (Mick Garris, 1997), or adaptations from the novels he wrote as Richard Bachman, such as *The Running Man* (Paul Michael Glaser, 1987) and *Thinner* (Tom Holland, 1996). If the novels of Stephen King are considered populist pulp, then they are clearly high-end pulp, displaying a phenomenally talented command of literary craftsmanship. 'The Shining is what George Orwell, with a nod to G. K. Chesterton, called a "good bad book" He defined this phenomenon as the "kind of book that has no literary pretensions but which remains readable when more serious productions have vanished".<sup>24</sup>. Stephen Magistrale, in his book *Hollywood's Stephen King*, noted that,

Filmmakers are...drawn to Stephen King's world because of his inimitable ability to tell an interesting story. King himself has often acknowledged that the best fiction is plot driven, comprised of characters the audience identifies with and cares about. It is certainly no surprise that these are likewise the same fundamental traits that all good movies share in common. Many of King's commentators have already noted that the author's published work is readily suited for presentation on the screen because he writes extremely visual, action-centered narratives.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Orwell, George, 'Good Bad Books' in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell. In Front of Your Nose: 1945-50* ed. by Sonja Orwell & Ian Angus, Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1968 p.19 quoted in Jenkins' *Stanley Kubrick and the Art of Adaptation* p.69

<sup>25</sup> Magistrale, Tony, *Hollywood's Stephen King* Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2003 p.xvi

In direct relevance to this statement, Kubrick has said that, ‘The novel (*The Shining*) is by no means a serious literary work, but the plot is for the most part extremely well worked out, and for a film that is often all that really matters.’<sup>26</sup> A number of extremely gifted directors, such as de Palma and Carpenter, have tried their hand at King adaptations with varying levels of success. However, Kubrick is another step up from these directors, being not just gifted but an actual *bona fide* cinematic genius, and thus the respective talents of both King and Kubrick (in spite of King’s thoughts to the contrary) produced what I regard to be one of the best and most memorable films of the 1980s, in addition to being one of the greatest horror films ever made. King, at least initially, was severely displeased with Kubrick’s treatment of his novel (‘The...problem is that Kubrick set out to make a horror picture with no apparent understanding of the genre. Everything about it screams that from beginning to end, from plot decision to the final scene – which has been used before on *The Twilight Zone*’<sup>27</sup>). However Burgess certainly wasn’t disappointed with Kubrick’s adaptation of his book: he remarked in a *Rolling Stone* piece that he was, ‘gratified that my book has been filmed by one of the best living English-speaking producer-directors, instead of by some pornhound or pighead or other camera-carrying cretin.’<sup>28</sup> – this in spite of his displeasure at the novel’s final chapter - in which Alex ultimately realises the true error of his ways - being omitted in favour of a far more cynical, “Kubrickian” conclusion.

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<sup>26</sup> Ciment, Michel, *Kubrick* Collins, London, 1983 reprinted in John Orr & Colin Nicholson’s (eds.) *Cinema & Fiction: New Modes of Adapting, 1950-90* Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1992 p.108

<sup>27</sup> King, Stephen, ‘Kubrick FAQ – The Shining’  
<http://www.visual-memory.co.uk/faq/html/shining/shining.html> (5.05.2008)

<sup>28</sup> Burgess, Anthony in *Rolling Stone* (8<sup>th</sup> June, 1972), quoted by James M. Welsh in  
‘A Kubrick Tribute: Adapting to Cinema’ *Literature/Film Quarterly* 1<sup>st</sup> January 2001  
p.4

The response to an adaptation from the source text's author is one thing, but it pales in comparison to the response from the audience of the film as a whole. In regards to an adaptation, this audience can essentially be divided into three groups: those who have read the original text, those who have not read it but have some idea about its content, and those who have no idea about its content whatsoever. The more popular a text, the smaller this third group will be (in recent years *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* series are good examples of this: plenty of people who have not read the books will nevertheless still possess a fair idea of what they contain, this knowledge generally acquired from the discussions of family members, friends, workmates and the media, and hence they have certain expectations regarding the filmic adaptations).

Fortunately for filmmakers, most filmgoers are aware that a director's vision isn't going to match their own perfectly, but this doesn't mean that they don't expect – or in the case of *bona fide* fanatics, demand – certain forms of fidelity to the source material. This may include an adherence to the plot, the inclusion of certain characters (generally major characters from the original text will be retained, but fans may be disappointed if an interesting minor character does not appear in the adaptation), faithfulness of costuming, the inclusion of certain important or entertaining scenes from the text, dialogue and acting which reflects the original characters, appropriate casting, and so on.

All of this goes to show that there is no *sine qua non* in regards to making an adaptation. The means by which filmmakers attempt to limit the number of variables involved which could potentially disappoint an audience well versed in the source material is by producing a straight transposition from the original text. In essence this involves, to the greatest extent possible, only using scenes and dialogue derived from the original text. As I mentioned previously, television miniseries and made-for-television movies are often transpositions. But by not overtly disappointing fans of the original text they may not especially excite them either. *The Shining* is an obvious case in point. Stanley Kubrick produced an adaptation which was a radical, innovative departure from Stephen King's novel. King, feeling that Kubrick performed a disservice to the thematic intent of his work, wrote and co-produced his own adaptation. Kubrick's adaptation, which provoked a wide variety of responses from disgust to amazement, will be remembered as one of the most interesting and thought-provoking horror films ever made; King's version, while adequate, is certainly not innovative or ground-breaking. Jean Mitry, one of the originators of adaptation studies, summarised this situation when he wrote:

...a novel and its adaptation rarely show no more than resemblance than the title – and one could argue such an “adaptation” exemplifies no more than a hastily purchased property. The average audience regards fidelity as a question of how much is left in: how much of the plot and how many of the characters survive the usual condensing of the novel’s action. Even to critics thinking in terms of form and content, this question of quantity isolates content and, to that extent, illegitimately ignores form. The more particularly elemental analysis of the neo-Aristotelian would take us beyond this common notion of fidelity to more specific questions of technical and formal fidelity. Fidelity concerns the kinds of choices made, not the number of choices that match the author’s.<sup>29</sup>

There is a considerable amount of truth contained within this paragraph, yet still, in the early years of the twenty-first century, many adaptation and intertextual scholars and critics regard fidelity as a checklist of literary features which can be checked off if they are included in the filmic adaptation, as opposed to whether or not the film captures the essence of what made people enjoy reading the book in the first place. However, there are promising signs that this is changing, thanks to scholars such as James Naremore, Maureen Quinn, and Robert Stam. During this thesis I will include apposite comments by these scholars, plus many others. I will also include a significant amount of commentary from the original purveyors of intertextual adaptation studies, such as André Bazin, George Bluestone and Jean Mitry.

Using the writing of these scholars, both recent and older, I will firstly look at Mary Harron’s adaptation of Bret Easton Ellis’ *American Psycho* and address areas of interest such as the distinctively cinematic elements of Easton Ellis’ writing and the important role of juxtaposition and narrative unreliability in both the novel and the film.

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<sup>29</sup> Mitry, Jean, ‘Remarks on the Problem of Cinematic Adaptation’ (trans. Richard Dyer) *The Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Languages Association* (4) (1971) pp.7-8 from James Griffith’s *Adaptations as Imitations: Films from Novels* Associated University Presses, Cranbury (NJ), 1997

Next I will study Terry Gilliam's adaptation of Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, particularly its thematic preoccupations, countercultural concerns and also, as with *American Psycho*, the dominant motif of narrative unreliability.

Then I will look at three Stanley Kubrick adaptations: Stephen King's *The Shining*, Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, and Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*. In these examples I will address such areas as visual symbolism, dominant literary devices such as metaphor and alliteration, satire, and the moral position of the author and how it is transformed or retained by the adaptive filmmaker.

The final film I will look at is John Frankenheimer's *The Fixer*, an adaptation of Bernard Malamud's novel of the same name. In this chapter I will discuss its presentation of the Jewish plight against both street-level and State sanctioned anti-Semitism, the ethical philosophy of Spinoza and its place in the novel, and the characterisation of the narrative's hero, Yakov Bok.

Finally, I will present my screenplay fragment, *Eleven A'Bier Place*, adapted from my novel fragment of the same name, and finally a self-analysis of this screenplay fragment, where I will discuss what I believe to be its successes and failures.

## **Chapter Two: *American Psycho*.**

Hollywood film producer Samuel Goldwyn, speaking to film theorist George Bluestone, explained that, ‘Some novels read like scenarios. Look at *Rebecca*. *Rebecca* reads like a scenario. But not *Wuthering Heights*.’<sup>30</sup> A much more recent example of a novel which reads like a scenario is Bret Easton Ellis’ *American Psycho* (1991). In fact, the novel is so intensely “cinematic” - in regard to both its form and content - that it is surprising that it took nearly a full decade before Mary Harron directed it in 2000: perhaps this had something to do with the graphic sex and violence depicted in the novel, some of which managed to find its way on to the screen.

In order to discover some of the novel’s inherently cinematic qualities we need look no further than the opening chapter: therein we find examples such as, ‘Like in a movie another bus appears...’<sup>31</sup>, ‘Pan down to the *Post*.’<sup>32</sup>, ‘A slow dissolve and Price is bounding up the steps outside the brownstone Evelyn’s father bought her...’<sup>33</sup> and, ‘Smash cut and I’m back in the kitchen.’<sup>34</sup>. There are further examples of this nature scattered throughout the novel, including, ‘From my POV Paul Owen sits at a table across the room with someone who looks a lot like Trent Moore, or Roger Daley, and some other guy who looks like Frederick Connell’<sup>35</sup>, ‘The waiter brings our drinks – two bottles of San Pellegrino water. Scene Two’<sup>36</sup>, ““What did you say?” As if in slow motion, like in a movie, she turns around.’<sup>37</sup>, and,

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<sup>30</sup> Bluestone, George, *Novels into Film*  
University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973 (1957) p.91

<sup>31</sup> Ellis, Bret Easton, *American Psycho*  
Pan Macmillan, London, 2000 (1991) pp.3-4

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.* p.5

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.* p.8

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.* p.11

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.* p.88

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.* p.236

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.* p.245

‘Like a smash cut from a horror movie – a jump zoom – Luis Carruthers appears, suddenly, without warning, from behind his column, slinking and jumping at the same time, if that’s possible.’<sup>38</sup> There are a number of other examples where Easton Ellis directly uses cinematic language in *American Psycho*, which could seem to indicate that he has borrowed a leaf, so to speak, from an Alain Robbe-Grillet book such as *The Immortal One: A Cine-Novel (L’Immortelle)* (1963). The distinctively cinematic aspect of the novel is directly indicated in Frank Lentricchia and Jody McAuliffe’s *Crimes of Art + Terror* when they write,

Bateman is a writer in the sense that these first-person notes/lists are his: he has written them. He is also a director in that he instructs the camera that his eyes have become to pan, cut, zoom, dissolve slowly, smash cut, lapse time. His life is a movie.<sup>39</sup>

This aspect of the novel is perhaps best illustrated by the following passage:

‘I am so used to imagining everything happening the way it occurs in movies, visualizing things falling somehow into the shape of events on a screen, that I almost hear the swelling of an orchestra, can almost hallucinate the camera panning low around us, fireworks bursting in slow motion overhead, the seventy-millimeter image of her lips parting and the subsequent murmur of “I want you” in Dolby sound.’<sup>40</sup>

There are a total of sixty chapters in Easton Ellis’ *American Psycho*; there are approximately fifty scenes in Harron’s adaptation of the novel. When we consider that almost every scene in the film has a basis in the book, it becomes clear that the film has strayed very little from the novel. However, this is only true in regard to its narrative, not its plot. Many of the scenes in the film are significantly out of sequence in relation to where they appear in the novel. For example, the sentence that concludes the protagonist and narrator Patrick

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<sup>38</sup> Ellis, *American Psycho* p.292

<sup>39</sup> Lentricchia, Frank & Jody McAuliffe, *Crimes of Art + Terror*

The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2003 p.61

<sup>40</sup> Ellis, *American Psycho* p.265

Bateman's (Christian Bale's) first voice over in the film reads, 'There is an idea of a Patrick Bateman, some kind of abstraction, but there is no real me, only an entity, something illusory, and though I can hide my cold gaze and you can shake my hand and feel flesh gripping yours and maybe you can even sense our lifestyles are probably comparable: *I simply am not there.*'<sup>41</sup>. However, in the novel this passage commences a paragraph which is concluded by Bateman's final voice-over in the film: 'But even after admitting this, there is no catharsis. I gain no deeper knowledge about myself, no new knowledge can be extracted from my telling. There has been no reason for me to tell you any of this. This confession has meant *nothing...*'<sup>42</sup>. Thus, while director Harron and her co-writer Guinevere Turner have derived almost every scene of the screenplay and the resulting film directly from the novel, the manner in which they have arranged them is often significantly out of sequence in relation to where these same scenes appear in the novel.

David Eldridge, in his essay 'The Generic American Psycho'<sup>43</sup>, writes that,

Ellis's graphic physical horror – including scenes of Bateman masturbating with the decapitated head of one female victim, and forcing a starving rat into the vagina of another – reminded one or two critics of the extreme “splatterpunk” horror writing of the late 1980s which was designed to be “stomach-churning” in its effect<sup>44</sup>. But since most “splatterpunk” authors, like those represented in Paul Sammon's 1990 anthology, had been marginalized and were largely unfamiliar to “mainstream” critics, many struggled to place *American Psycho* in a convincing context of print. Instead, reviewers fell back on their awareness of film, asserting that Ellis must have had “Freddy Krueger

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<sup>41</sup> Harron, Mary & Guinevere Turner, *American Psycho* Fourth Draft, November 1998  
p.10

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.* p.104

<sup>43</sup> Eldridge, David, 'The Generic American Psycho' in *Journal of American Studies*  
(42) Cambridge University Press, 2008 p.20

<sup>44</sup> Manguel, Alberto, 'Designer Porn' in *Saturday Night* July 1991 p.46 quoted in  
Eldridge, 'The Generic American Psycho' p.20



fixed in his head” to produce a book “as ridiculous in its excesses as the horror films it purports to emulate.”<sup>45</sup>

Judging from this comment, even the most literate and well-read of critics found it extraordinarily difficult, even impossible, to propose any generically antecedent texts for *American Psycho*; instead they could only provide by way of predecessor texts mainstream horror films such as the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series. This is not to say that horror fiction has not had a long and illustrious history, but rather that *American Psycho* was unlike any horror novel yet written – or at least unlike any *well-written* horror novel that had come before it.

ABANDON ALL HOPE YE WHO ENTER HERE is scrawled in blood red lettering on the side of the Chemical Bank near the corner of Eleventh and First and is in print large enough to be seen from the backseat of the cab as it lurches forward in the traffic leaving Wall Street and just as Timothy Price notices the words a bus pulls up, the advertisement for *Les Misérables* on its side blocking his view, but Price who is with Pierce & Pierce and twenty-six doesn’t seem to care because he tells the driver he will give him five dollars to turn up the radio, “Be My Baby” on WYNN, and the driver, black, not American, does so.

“I’m resourceful,” Price is saying. “I’m creative, I’m young, unscrupulous, highly motivated, highly skilled. In essence what I’m saying is that society *cannot* afford to lose me. I’m an *asset*.” Price calms down, continues to stare out the cab’s dirty window, probably at the word FEAR sprayed in red graffiti on the side of a McDonald’s on Fourth and Seventh.<sup>46</sup>

This is the opening chapter and a half of the novel: even this early in the narrative we can locate some distinctly cinematic elements. Graffiti in symbolic blood red lettering (the initial phrase is derived from the words printed above the entrance to Hell in Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy (Divina Commedia)* (1308-21); specific music playing on the “soundtrack”; snappy, succinct dialogue – these components add up to make a literary

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<sup>45</sup> Kennedy, Pagan, ‘Generation Gaffe’ in *Nation* 1<sup>st</sup> April 1993 p.426 quoted in Eldridge, ‘The Generic American Psycho’ p.20

<sup>46</sup> Ellis, *American Psycho* p.3

passage which could, with minimal alteration, be quite easily adapted into a cinematic scene (this passage was not included in Harron's film, but that is not particularly surprising as there are many more passages in the novel which possess similarly cinematic attributes).

On page 33 of the novel we find the following exchange between Patrick Bateman and three of his friends/co-workers:

"What do we want to eat?" Me.

"Something blond with big tits." Price.

"How about that Salvadorian bistro?" McDermott.

"Listen, we're stopping by Tunnel afterwards so somewhere near there." Van Patten.<sup>47</sup>

While ostensibly remaining prose, the manner in which this dialogue is presented is much closer to the scenario or screenplay than it is to the usual form of literary dialogue. Yet unlike with the cinema, Easton Ellis does not present the reader with any visual information in this passage to suggest, for example, the reactions of the individual characters: the only information he provides the reader with is the name of the speakers and what they say. He has stripped fiction down to its most basic element: the sparse, minimalistic presentation of objective facts. However, the irony of this supposedly objective manner in which Bateman as narrator provides us with incessant, interminable information regarding clothes, meals, health regimens and so forth is that, as the narrative progresses, Bateman becomes an increasingly unreliable narrator as he slides into insanity.

...I come to the conclusion that Patricia *is* safe tonight, that I am not going to unexpectedly pull a knife out and use it on her just for the sake of doing so, that I am not going to get any pleasure watching her bleed from slits I've made by cutting her throat or slicing her neck open or gouging her eyes out. She's lucky, even though there is no real reasoning behind the luck. It could be that she's safe because her wealth, her *family's* wealth, protects her tonight, or it could be that it's simply *my* choice. Maybe the glass of Scharffenberger has deadened my impulse or maybe it's simply that I don't

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<sup>47</sup> Ellis, *American Psycho* p.33

want to ruin this particular Alexander Julian suit by having the bitch spray her blood all over it. Whatever happens, the useless fact remains: Patricia will stay alive, and this victory requires no skill, no leaps of the imagination, no ingenuity on anyone's part. This is simply how the world, *my* world, moves.<sup>48</sup>

This paragraph effectively illustrates the unreliability of Bateman's narration: he can provide only haphazard suggestions as to why he will not kill Patricia on this particular occasion, and can not explain the inner workings of his reasoning. This is even more clearly expressed a few pages later:

On my way into the Chinese cleaners I brush past a crying bum, an old man, forty or fifty, fat and grizzled, and just as I'm opening the door I notice, to top it off, that he's also *blind* and I step on his foot, which is actually a stump, causing him to drop his cup, scattering change all over the sidewalk. Did I do this on purpose? What do you think? Or did I do this accidentally?<sup>49</sup>

The peak of narrative unreliability occurs when the narrator asks the reader to make their own judgment regarding his behavior, for he is incapable of determining the causes of his own actions. Patrick Bateman may be able to list what his co-workers are wearing, but he is uncertain as to which man is which; he may be able to recite what *The New York Times* or *New York Magazine* said in its review of a restaurant, but he does not know at the end of the evening whether he will have sex with his date, or kill her, or both, or simply let her free. To some extent this is communicated in the filmic adaptation, but not nearly as clearly and nowhere near as forcefully until Bateman's rapid downfall in the film's third act. There are certainly very strong indications however, such as this scene involving Bateman's voice-over in a beauty salon:

BATEMAN (V.O.)

I have all the characteristics of a human being -- flesh, blood,

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<sup>48</sup> Ellis, *American Psycho* pp.76-7

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.* pp.81-2

skin, hair-but not a single clear, identifiable emotion except for greed, and disgust. Something horrible is happening inside me and I don't know why.

CUT TO:

Bateman sitting in a chair, looking down at the MANICURIST who is giving him a pedicure. She is cutting his nails with tiny sharp scissors. He stares at them longingly.

BATEMAN (V.O.)

My nightly bloodlust has overflowed into my days. I feel lethal, on the verge of frenzy.

CUT TO:

Bateman lying irradiated by ultraviolet light on a tanning bed, wearing goggles.

BATEMAN (V.O.)

I think my mask of sanity is about to slip.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Harron, Mary & Guinevere Turner, *American Psycho Screenplay*

Fourth Draft, November 1998 Screenplays for You <http://sfy.ru> p.35 (9.07.2008)



Fig. 1.1 *American Psycho* (Mary Harron, 2000) Patrick Bateman (Christian Bale) is about to murder Paul Allen (Jared Leto).

Shortly after this sequence Bateman ostensibly murders Paul Allen (played by Jared Leto; the character is called Paul Owen in the novel) with an axe, the scene which effectively commences the “murder mystery” element in both the novel and the film, including the appearance of Detective Donald Kimball (played by Willem Dafoe). He will go on to seemingly murder a number of prostitutes and tramps throughout the narrative; however, the epistemological question which faces both readers and viewers is whether or not we can accept as fact the testimony of the “unreliable narrator” Patrick Bateman. This “epistemological crisis” as experienced by Bateman is more effectively communicated in the novel, as of course we only receive his word regarding his actions, while in the film we witness his homicidal behaviour. Therefore, as film viewers, we must accept the murders we have witnessed as only occurring inside Bateman’s head, while as novel readers we can accept that Bateman is providing us with his delusional, hallucinatory, psychopathic fantasies. Therefore, in the novel we find a passage such as:

“Did I ever tell you that I want to wear a big yellow smiley-face mask and then put on the CD version of Bobby McFerrin’s ‘Don’t Worry, Be Happy’ and then take a girl and a dog – a collie, a chow, a sharpei, it doesn’t really matter – and then hook up this transfusion pump, this IV set, and switch their blood, you know, pump the dog’s blood into the hardbody and vice versa, did I ever tell you this?”<sup>51</sup>

However, in the film we are not provided with any indications *per se* of Bateman’s fantasy life, but only with his supposedly “actual” murders. We are provided with very strong indications though, such as the following scene which occurs early in the film:

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Bateman saunters toward the bar as "Pump Up the Volume"  
plays in the background.

BATEMAN (to BARGIRL) Two Stoli on the rocks.

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<sup>51</sup> Ellis, *American Psycho* p.116

He hands her two drink tickets.

BARGIRL

It's after eleven. Those aren't good anymore. It's  
a cash bar. That'll be twenty-five dollars.

Bateman pulls out an expensive-looking wallet and hands her  
a \$50.

She turns her back and searches the cash register for  
change.

BATEMAN You are a fucking ugly bitch I want to stab to  
death and then play around with your blood.

The music muffles his voice. She turns around. He is  
smiling at her. She gives him his change impassively.<sup>52</sup>

In the novel however, Easton Ellis is constantly reminding the reader that his protagonist and narrator Patrick Bateman is subject to extreme hallucinations; after all, Bateman may not have actually committed the many murders he thinks he has, but there exists no doubt whatsoever that his brain is severely diseased.

...I hallucinate the buildings into mountains, into volcanoes, the streets become jungles, the sky freezes into a backdrop, and before stepping out of the cab I have to cross my

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<sup>52</sup> Harron & Turner, *American Psycho Screenplay* pp.8-9

eyes in order to clear my vision. Lunch at Hubert's becomes a permanent hallucination in which I find myself dreaming while still awake.<sup>53</sup>

This is an example of Bateman's incredibly vivid hallucinations, as is the following:

Yes, my brain does explode and my stomach bursts open inwardly – a spastic, acidic, gastric reaction; stars and planets, whole galaxies made up entirely of little white chef hats, race over the film of my vision.<sup>54</sup>

However, these indications of Bateman's mental state pale in comparison to the following paragraph, taken from late in the novel, which is surely one of the most extraordinary passages in the novel, a passage which illustrates perfectly Patrick Bateman's – or rather, Bret Easton Ellis' – penchant for the literary device of listing:

“Where are you going?” she asks again.

I make no comment, lost in my own private maze, thinking about other things: warrants, stock offerings, ESOPs, LBOs, IPOs, finances, refinances, debentures, converts, proxy statements, 8-Ks, 10-Ks, zero coupons, PiKs, GNPs, the IMF, hot executive gadgets, billionaires, Kenkichi Nakajima, infinity, Infinity, how fast a luxury car should go, bailouts, junk bonds, whether to cancel my subscription to *The Economist*, the Christmas Eve when I was fourteen and had raped one of our maids, Inclusivity, envying someone's life, whether someone could survive a fractured skull, waiting in airports, stifling a scream, credit cards and someone's passport and a book of matches from La Côte Basque splattered with blood, surface surface surface, a Rolls is a Rolls is a Rolls. To Evelyn our relationship is yellow and blue, but to me it's a gray place, most of it blacked out, bombed, footage from the film in my head is endless shots of stone and any language heard is utterly foreign, the sound flickering away over new images: blood pouring from automated tellers, women giving birth though their assholes, embryos frozen or scrambled (which is it?), nuclear warheads, billions of dollars, the total destruction of the world, someone gets beaten up, someone else dies,

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<sup>53</sup> Ellis, *American Psycho* p.86

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.* p.239



sometimes bloodlessly, more often mostly by rifle shot, assassinations, comas, life played out as a sitcom, a blank canvas that reconfigures itself into a soap opera. It's an isolation ward that serves only to expose my own severely impaired capacity to feel. I am at its center, out of season, and no one ever asks me for any identification. I suddenly imagine Evelyn's skeleton, twisted and crumbling, and this fills me with glee.<sup>55</sup>

As well as being an intensely disturbing stream of consciousness insight into Bateman's mental state, this passage deserves analysis for a number of other reasons. As I have mentioned, Easton Ellis utilises cinematic references and terminology throughout *American Psycho*, including in this passage: 'footage from the film in my head,' 'sound flickering away over new images,' 'life played out as a sitcom,' However, it is not necessarily surprising that this passage was not included in Harron's film: images of a fourteen-year-old Bateman raping his maid or women giving birth through their arseholes would have undoubtedly been too much for many mainstream cinema-goers to handle.

Also interesting is the phrase, 'surface surface surface.' This could easily be the mantra of many a Postmodernist and Poststructuralist theorist, Jean Baudrillard chief among them:

The location of the postmodern is pure surface for Baudrillard because there is no inherent relation between the signified and the signifier, there is no fixed origin of meaning (All is "simulacra"...)<sup>56</sup>

I mention this because *American Psycho* could potentially be seen as exemplifying postmodern fiction: it does, after all, depict a protagonist – and, indeed, an entire society – concerned solely with surface. Patrick Bateman is a *bona fide* psychopath, yet this does not concern his friends, co-workers and associates: all that matters is that he can reserve a semi-decent table, correctly answer challenging questions intended for the fashion editor at *GQ*,

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<sup>55</sup> Ellis, *American Psycho* pp.342-3

<sup>56</sup> Norman, Brian, 'Modern/Postmodern and the Twentieth Century' Spring 2006  
evergreen.loyola.edu/bjnorman/www/modpostmod\_schema.doc (11/02/2009)

wear an appropriate jacket with the right trousers, and own the latest hi-fi equipment. As Harvey O'Brien has noted:

*American Psycho* is a film without a context, a floating signifier in a morass of postmodernism which has long out-paced the representation conventions it employs. The novel will remain an important moment in late twentieth century culture and a noteworthy contributor to postmodern literature. The film is a footnote.<sup>57</sup>

Also of relevance towards the schema of *American Psycho* is the manner in which Easton Ellis juxtaposes the banal with the bizarre, the dull with the diabolical, the everyday with the evil, the humdrum with the horrific, the mundane with the monstrous, the prosaic with the psychopathic. In the above quotation stocks and bonds are juxtaposed with images of blood pouring from automated tellers and the total destruction of the world. Another good example of this is the following sequence:

“Travelers looking for that perfect vacation this summer may do well to look south, as far south as the Bahamas and the Caribbean islands. There are at least five smart reasons for visiting the Caribbean including the weather and the festivals and the events, the less crowded hotels and attractions, the price and the unique cultures. While many vacationers leave the cities in search of cooler climates during the summer months, few have realized that the Caribbean has a year-round climate of seventy-five to eighty-five degrees and that the islands are constantly cooled by the trade winds. It is frequently hotter north in...”

On *The Patty Winters Show* this morning the topic was Toddler-Murderers.<sup>58</sup>

Here Easton Ellis contrasts the banality of one of Bateman's frequent lectures, coupled with his obsession with *The Patty Winters Show*, to infanticide – presumably a topic close to Bateman's heart. This has a dual effect: it illustrates two of Bateman's obsessions, i.e. lowbrow television and murder, and indicates that he is no more capable of resisting one,

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<sup>57</sup> O'Brien, Harvey, <http://homepage.eircom.net/~obrienh/ampsy.htm> (2000)

(11/02/2009)

<sup>58</sup> Ellis, *American Psycho* pp.137-8

respectable, urge – watching a favourite television programme – than he is of discontinuing another – murder. Effectively this suggests that, in a media-saturated society, the killing of infants is not necessarily any more worthy of attracting public interest than a travel show. Both are simply forms of entertainment.

The following monologue achieves something of a similar effect:

I place the tray of truffles on the glass-top Palazzetti coffee table and sit back in the armchair, motioning for Christie to get back on the couch, which she does. We sit here silently, listening to the *Les Misérables* CD. Sabrina chews on the truffle thoughtfully and takes another.

I have to break the silence again myself. “So have either of you been abroad?” It hits me almost immediately what the sentence sounds like, how it could be misinterpreted. “I mean to Europe?”<sup>59</sup>

Bateman’s continual references to designer accoutrements - in this instance foreign furniture - are combined with a mention of the Broadway musical *Les Misérables*, which occurs in at least half the chapters of the novel. This establishes a humorous juxtaposition to the fact that he does not wish to commit a *faux pas* in the company of two hookers by suggesting that they are possibly transvestites.

An extremely effective example of this sort of slightly unnerving, comic juxtaposition is the following, taken from a chapter in which Patrick Bateman and some of his friends are at a nightclub with three models:

Libby nods slowly, her features quizzical in the candlelight, and stands up. “Excuse us.” They leave. Daisy stays, sips Caron’s champagne. I imagine her naked, murdered, maggots burrowing, feasting on her stomach, tits blackened by cigarette burns, Libby eating this corpse out, then I clear my throat. “So it was really hot today, wasn’t it?”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ellis, *American Psycho* p.172

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.* p.205

Throughout the novel sex and death are intimately entwined within the mind of Patrick Bateman, which is not necessarily surprising in that this is the case with many a psychopath. More disconcerting is the fact that someone possessing a superior consumer item, a superior business card, or even the ability to acquire a superior reservation at a restaurant, will instill in Patrick Bateman a murderous rage. One of the most effective and memorable examples of this tendency in the film is the following scene, occurring in the boardroom of Pierce & Pierce, where Patrick Bateman works:

Bateman takes out his wallet and pulls out a card.

PRICE

(Suddenly enthused)

What's that, a gram?

BATEMAN

New card. What do you think?

McDermott lifts it up and examines the lettering carefully.

McDERMOTT

Whoa. Very nice. Take a look.

He hands it to Van Patten.

BATEMAN

Picked them up from the printers yesterday.

VAN PATTEN

Good coloring.

BATEMAN

That's bone. And the lettering is something called Silian Rail.

McDERMOTT

(Envious)

Silian Rail?

VAN PATTEN

It is very cool, Bateman. But that's nothing.

He pulls a card out of his wallet and slaps it on the table.

VAN PATTEN

Look at this.

They all lean forward to inspect it.

PRICE

That's really nice.

Bateman clenches his fists beneath the table, trying to control his anxiety.

VAN PATTEN

Eggshell with Romalian type.

(Turning to Bateman)

What do you think?

BATEMAN

(Barely able to breath, his voice a croak)

Nice.

PRICE

(Holding the card up to the light)

Jesus. This is really super. How'd a nitwit like you get so tasteful?

Bateman stares at his own card and then enviously at McDermott's.

BATEMAN (V.O.)

I can't believe that Price prefers McDermott's card to mine.

PRICE

But wait. You ain't seen nothin' yet.

He holds up his own card.

PRICE

Raised lettering, pale nimbus white...

BATEMAN

(Choking with anxiety)

Impressive. Very nice. Let's see Paul Owen's card.

Paul pulls a card from an inside coat pocket and holds it up for their inspection: "PAUL OWEN, PIERCE & PIERCE, MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS."

Bateman swallows, speechless.

The sound in the room dies down and all we hear is a faint heartbeat as Bateman stares at the magnificent card.

BATEMAN (V.O.)

Look at that subtle off-white coloring. The tasteful thickness of it. Oh my God, it even has a watermark...

His hand shaking, Bateman lifts up the card and stares at it until it fills the screen.

He lets it fall. The SOUND RETURNS TO NORMAL.

CARRUTHERS

Is something wrong? Patrick...you're sweating.<sup>61</sup>

The “juxtaposition effect” which is such an intrinsic feature of both the novel and the film is brilliantly illustrated in the film during the scene in which Patrick “murders” Paul Owen (later changed to Paul Allen) in his apartment:

Bateman moves to the CD player. He takes a CD out of its case and slides it in the machine.

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<sup>61</sup> Harron & Turner, *American Psycho* pp.30-1

BATEMAN

In 1987 Huey released Fore!, their most accomplished album. I think their undisputed masterpiece is "Hip To Be Square," a song so catchy that most people probably don't listen to the lyrics. But they should because it's not just about the pleasures of conformity and the importance of trends. It's also a personal statement about the band itself.

Bateman puts on "Hip To Be Square."

BATEMAN crosses the room and picks up the ax.

We follow BATEMAN from behind as he walks up to Owen, the ax raised over his head.

BATEMAN

Hey, Paul?

As Owen turns around, FROM OWEN'S POV we see Bateman swing the ax toward his face.

Blood sprays onto the white raincoat.

FROM BEHIND OWEN, we see BATEMAN as he yanks the ax out.

Owen drops to the floor. His body falls out of the frame. We stay on his legs twitching mechanically.

Blood pulses onto the newspaper-covered floor.



BATEMAN

(Raising the ax and screaming)

Try getting a reservation at Dorsia now, you fucking stupid bastard!

LOW ANGLE ON BATEMAN as he beats Owen with the ax. <sup>62</sup>

A vicious and brutal ax murder is contrasted, firstly, by Bateman's mini-lecture on the merits of the Huey Lewis and the News album *Fore!*, and also by the catchy, decidedly non-threatening nature of the song 'Hip to be Square' playing on the soundtrack, and, following the murder, Patrick's scream of, 'Try getting a reservation at Dorsia now, you fucking stupid bastard!'

While these sorts of extreme juxtapositions are certainly existent in the filmic adaptation, as illustrated above, they occur much more frequently in the novel. Quoted below is a typically humorous example on the part of Patrick Bateman, taking place in a restaurant called Deck Chairs:

"I've heard of post-California cuisine," I say, acutely aware of the design of the restaurant: the exposed pipe and the columns and the open pizza kitchen and the...deck chairs. "In fact I've even eaten it. No baby vegetables? Scallops in burritos? Wasabi crackers? Am I on the right track? And by the way, did anyone ever tell you that you look exactly like Garfield but run over and skinned and then someone threw an ugly Ferragamo sweater over you before they rushed you to the vet? Fusilli? Olive oil on Brie?"

"Exactly," Anne says, impressed. <sup>63</sup>

Almost immediately after this exchange we are subjected to this internal monologue on the part of Patrick Bateman, which similarly shows the extreme juxtaposition which occurs inside the confines of his diseased mind:

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<sup>62</sup> Harron & Turner, *American Psycho* pp.39-40

<sup>63</sup> Ellis, *American Psycho* pp.94-5

Scott and Anne insisted that we all order some kind of blackened medium-rare redfish, a Deck Chairs specialty which was, luckily for them, an entrée on one of the mock menus that Jean made up for me. It is hadn't, and if they nevertheless insisted on my ordering it, the odds were pretty good that after dinner tonight I would have broken in to Scott and Anne's studio at around two this morning – after *Late Night with David Letterman* – and with an axe chopped them to pieces, first making Anne watch Scott bleed to death from gaping chest wounds, and then I would have found a way to get to Exeter where I would pour a bottle of acid all over their son's slanty-eyed zipperhead face. Our waitress is a little hardbody who is wearing gold faux-pearl tasseled lizard sling-back pumps. I forgot to return my videotapes to the store tonight and I curse myself silently while Scott orders two large bottles of San Pellegrino.<sup>64</sup>

Such banalities – at least in Patrick Bateman's world – as a seafood dish, a television programme, the attractiveness of a waitress, what she is wearing and returning rented videotapes, are contrasted with the grisly ax murder of his two dinner companions, their resultant gaping chest wounds and an acid attack upon, '...their son's slanty-eyed zipperhead face.' Then, a mere two pages later, occurs another brilliantly pitched juxtaposition:

Last night I rented a movie called *Inside Lydia's Ass* and while on two Halcion and in fact sipping a Diet Pepsi, I watched as Lydia – a totally tan bleached-blond hardbody with a perfect ass and great full tits – while on all fours gave head to this guy with a huge cock while another gorgeous blonde little hardbody with a perfectly trimmed blonde pussy knelt behind Lydia and after eating her ass out and sucking on her cunt, started to push a long, greased silver vibrator into Lydia's ass and fucked her with it while she continued to eat her pussy and the guy with the huge cock came all over Lydia's face as she sucked his balls and then Lydia bucked to an authentic-looking, fairly strong orgasm and then the girl behind Lydia crawled around and licked the come from Lydia's face and then made Lydia suck on the vibrator. The new Stephen Bishop came out last Tuesday and at Tower Records yesterday I bought the compact disc, the cassette and the album because I wanted to own all three formats.<sup>65</sup>

Two of Patrick Bateman's obsessions – sex and music – are here disconcertingly juxtaposed for comic effect, while also providing one of many examples of his penchant for listing: in

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<sup>64</sup> Ellis, *American Psycho* p.95

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.* pp.97-8

this case the actions of the actors in a pornographic movie. In the film this is best illustrated in the following scene involving two prostitutes in Patrick's apartment:

Bateman goes over to his CDs and scans his vast collection. He takes one out and examines it.

BATEMAN

Do you like Phil Collins? I've been a big Genesis fan ever since the release of their 1980 album, Duke. Before that I really didn't understand any of their work. It was too artsy, too intellectual. It was on Duke where Phil Collins' presence became more apparent. He puts aside the CD and takes out another one.

BATEMAN

I think "Invisible Touch" is the group's undisputed masterpiece.

He puts on the song and gestures for them to follow him into the bedroom.

BATEMAN

It's an epic meditation on intangibility, at the same time it deepens and enriches the meaning of the preceding three albums. Christie, take off the robe.

Bateman puts out a lace teddy. He motions to Christie to put it on.

BATEMAN

Listen to the brilliant ensemble playing of Banks, Collins and Rutherford. You can practically hear every nuance of every instrument. Sabrina, remove your dress.

Bateman starts to undress.

BATEMAN

In terms of lyrical craftsmanship and sheer songwriting, this album hits a new peak of professionalism. Sabrina, why don't you dance a little?

Sabrina dances awkwardly. Christie sits on the bed.

BATEMAN

Take the lyrics to "Land of Confusion." In this song, Phil Collins addresses the problem of abusive political authority.

Bateman knots a silk scarf around Christie's neck - rather menacingly - then helps her into some suede gloves.

BATEMAN

"In Too Deep" is the most moving pop song of the 1980s about monogamy and commitment. The song is extremely uplifting. Their lyrics are as positive and affirmative as anything I've heard in rock.

He turns on the video camera.

BATEMAN

Christie, get down on your knees, so Sabrina can see your asshole.

Bateman looks through the viewfinder.

BATEMAN

Phil Collins solo efforts seem to be more commercial and therefore more satisfying in a narrower way, especially songs like "In the Air Tonight" and "Against All Odds." Sabrina, don't just stare at it. Eat it.

He walks over to the sound system in his bedroom and slides in the CD.

BATEMAN

But I also think that Phil Collins works better within the confines of the group than as a solo artist-and I stress the word artist. This is "Sussudio," a great, great song, a personal favorite.

SEX MONTAGE CUT TO "Sussudio." We see this in WIDE SHOT, or through the LENS OF THE VIDEO CAMERA.<sup>66</sup>

Here Patrick Bateman uses the language of music criticism in his assessment of the merits of Genesis and Phil Collins, as well as acting as a director. These details show the enormous extent to which Bateman is affected by the media which is constantly surrounding him, to the extent that, as Lentricchia and McAuliffe stated in the quotation at the beginning of this chapter, he *is* a director, music critic, etc. A similar sort of juxtaposition, except between death and dining, occurs relatively late in the novel:

In the morning, for some reason, Christie's battered hands are swollen to the size of footballs, the fingers are indistinguishable from the rest of her hand and the smell coming from her burnt corpse is jolting and I have to open the Venetian blinds, which are spattered with burnt fat from when Christie's breasts burst apart, electrocuting her, and then the windows, to air out the room. Her eyes are wide open and glazed over and her mouth is lipless and black and there's also a black pit where her vagina should be (though I don't remember doing anything to it) and her lungs are visible beneath the charred ribs. What is left of Elizabeth's body lies crumpled in the corner of the living room. She's missing her right arm and chunks of her right leg. Her left hand, chopped off at the wrist, lies clenched on top of the island in the kitchen, in its own small pool of blood. Her hand sits on the kitchen table and its blood-soaked face – even with both eyes scooped out and a pair of Alain Mikli sunglasses over the holes – looks like it's frowning. I get very tired looking at it and though I didn't get any sleep last night and I'm utterly spent, I still have a lunch appointment at Odeon with Jem Davies and Alana

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<sup>66</sup> Harron & Turner, *American Psycho* pp.56-7

Burton at one. That's very important to me and I have to debate whether I should cancel it or not.<sup>67</sup>

A further juxtaposition between death and dining is the following:

Evelyn is talking but I'm not listening. Her dialogue overlaps her own dialogue. Her mouth is moving but I'm not hearing anything and I can't listen, I can't really concentrate, since my rabbit has been cut to look...just...like...a...star! Shoestring French fries surround it and chunky red salsa has been smeared across the top of the plate – which is white and porcelain and two feet wide – to give the appearance of a sunset but it looks like one big gunshot wound to me...<sup>68</sup>

These preceding two paragraphs illustrate some of the reasons why Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* posed a unique challenge to director Mary Harron and her co-writer Guinevere Turner. In addition to the ubiquitous pornographic sexual content and grisly, gruesome murders, rapes and tortures there are also significantly less obvious reasons why an adaptation of this novel was such a challenging task. Much of the narrative's humour is contained within Patrick Bateman's internal monologues; however, too many such voice-overs in the film would make it feel stilted and lacking in natural forward momentum. Similarly, some of the most satirically comic dialogue is subtly nuanced, and thus may not be as effective, and therefore as appreciated, in a film as it is in a novel. The novel is extraordinarily episodic in regards to its plot structure, whereas a film usually requires a more pronounced "three act structure". Easton Ellis' incessant utilisation of listing just about everything that occurs in his narrator and protagonist Patrick Bateman's life is not ideally suited to the cinematic medium (or at least only for very short periods of time, unlike the relatively lengthy chapters containing nothing besides these lists). Many of the narrative's characters are fundamentally unlikable, while its ending is inconclusive (these are not inherently negative features in a film, although they do certainly possess the possibility of giving rise to problems within a cinematic context).

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<sup>67</sup> Ellis, *American Psycho* pp.290-1

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.* p.123

These are just some of the dilemmas faced by Mary Harron and her filmmaking team in directing *American Psycho* from script development to post-production. It would not have been at all surprising if, given these challenges, *American Psycho* had of turned out to be an excruciatingly poor adaptation. Instead, it is an extremely accomplished piece of cinematic art, as well as an effective illustration of a successful transpositional adaptation.

### **Chapter Three: *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream.***

The film *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (Terry Gilliam, 1998) opens with sepia documentary images depicting important American sociopolitical events of the 1960s, played over the Lennon Sisters singing 'My Favourite Things' - a pertinent irony, considering its synonymousness with an entirely different film, *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, 1965). We witness a helicopter taking off in Vietnam, a young man carrying a placard which reads 'Get Out of Saigon and Into Selma', a Southern-looking Good Ol' Boy cop, and some anti-war protest scenes, interspersed by shots of sprayed blood. The film's title then appears in bright red lettering which drips down the screen to reveal Dr. Samuel Johnson's motto at the head of the opening chapter of the novella: "He who makes a beast of himself gets rid of the pain of being a man." From this point on, the opening scenes of the film closely follow the opening chapters of the literary text. The film's protagonist Raoul Duke's (Johnny Depp's) voice-over recites the opening paragraph of the novella, beginning, 'We were somewhere around Barstow, on the edge of the desert, when the drugs began to take hold.'

The documentary footage that opens the cinematic version alludes to what is perhaps the primary thematic strand within both the novella and the film: man's inhumanity to man (hence Dr. Johnson's quotation), specifically in relation to the loss of countercultural idealism as the "flower power" altruism (in actually merely unabated hedonism) of the 1960s gave way to the cynically pragmatic realism of the 1970s (Hunter S. Thompson's novella first appeared in installments in *Rolling Stone* magazine in 1971). In response to P. J. O'Rourke's opening statement of a *Rolling Stone* interview, 'At the time you were writing 'Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas,' you implied that things had gone wrong with the Sixties, that it was a flawed era.', Thompson replied,

Well, the truth of the matter was, there was Kent State, there was Chicago, there was Altamont. The Sixties was about the Free Speech Movement long before it was about the flower children.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Wenner, Jann S. & Joe Levy (eds.), *The Rolling Stone Interviews* Black Bay Books, New York, 2007 p.388





Fig. 2.1 *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (Terry Gilliam, 1998) Raoul Duke (Johnny Depp) is scheming with his attorney Dr. Gonzo (Benicio del Toro) at the Beverly Hills Hotel.

This thematic commentary in the novella – and to a lesser extent, in the filmic adaptation – of the radical transition between the heyday of the countercultural youth culture in America, remembered especially for the San Francisco “Summer of Love” and the Woodstock Music Festival, and the age of the United States military intervention in Vietnam and the Nixon Presidency, is explicated towards the end of *Fear in Loathing in Las Vegas* when Thompson writes:

Nobody...at the time, could possibly have foreseen the Implications of the Ginsberg/Kesey failure to persuade the Hell’s Angels to join forces with the radical Left from Berkeley. The final split came at Altamont, four years later, but by that time it had long been clear to everybody except a handful of rock industry dopers and the national press. The orgy of violence at Altamont merely dramatized the problem. The realities were already fixed; the illness was understood to be terminal, and the energies of The Movement were long since aggressively dissipated by the rush to self-preservation.<sup>70</sup>

Following the initial cinematic “scene setting” we join Raoul Duke, a Doctor of Journalism, and Dr. Gonzo (played by Benicio del Toro), his Samoan Attorney, in the “Great Red Shark” – the name of their hired fire apple red Chevrolet convertible – as they speed through Death Valley on their way to cover the Mint 400 motorcycle race in Las Vegas for, ‘a fashionable sporting magazine in New York’<sup>71</sup>. Both are extremely high on various drugs: Duke’s hallucinations involve hordes of bats flying around the car. As Hunter S. Thompson stated in a *Rolling Stone* interview, ‘Well, that’s what *Vegas* is about. It’s about the altered perceptions of the characters. To me, that’s really the bedrock of the book...’<sup>72</sup>. After picking up a young male hitchhiker (played by Tobey Maguire) Duke explains, in both the novella and the filmic adaptation, how they came to be in the desert: they were drinking Singapore Slings with Mescal on the side in the Polo Lounge of the Beverly Hills Hotel when a dwarf (played by Michael Lee Gogin) brought Duke a phone call, issuing instructions to

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<sup>70</sup> Thompson, Hunter S., *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream* HarperCollins, London, 1998 (1971) pp.179-80

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.* p.3

<sup>72</sup> Wenner & Levy, *The Rolling Stone Interviews* p.389

travel to Las Vegas immediately. They hire the “Shark” from an extremely nervous car rental agent (played by Larry Cedar) and, in addition to purchasing a car boot-load of drugs, they acquire a tape recorder and microphone to covertly record people’s conversations: a detail which is more important in the novella than in the film.

...our trip was...a classic affirmation of everything right and true and decent in the national character. It was a gross, physical salute to the fantastic *possibilities* of life in this country – but only for those with true grit. And we were chock full of that.<sup>73</sup>

For all intents and purposes this acts as Duke’s, and thus Hunter S. Thompson’s, official explanation for the two men’s drug-fueled jaunt to Las Vegas. The story Duke provides to the hitchhiker is that, ‘...we’re *both* doctors of journalism, and we’re on our way to Las Vegas to cover the main story of our generation.’<sup>74</sup> Immediately after this Dr. Gonzo counters with ‘we’re going to Vegas to croak a scag baron named Savage Henry. I’ve known him for years, but he ripped us off...’<sup>75</sup> All three of these explanations are included in Gilliam’s film. One fantasy story is added to another, at least in part because the two men have no real idea *why* they are traveling to Las Vegas, other than to ingest drugs and generally cause havoc (and to “find” the American Dream); it is certainly not to merely cover the Mint 400 motorcycle race.

It seems appropriate to provide a brief outline of the term ‘gonzo’, as it is particularly relevant in regard to Thompson’s novella. Effectively an offshoot of New Journalism -- ‘a style of journalism using techniques borrowed from fiction to portray a situation or event as vividly as possible.’<sup>76</sup> which flourished from about the mid 1960s to the mid 1970s, *Gonzo* (in its journalistic sense) is officially defined as, ‘focusing on the eccentric personality or

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<sup>73</sup> Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* p.18

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.* p.19

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Makins, Marian, et al. (eds.), *Collins Concise Dictionary* 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.

HarperCollins, Glasgow, 1995 (1982) p.897

lifestyle of the reporter as much as on the events reported.’<sup>77</sup> In reference to this, Thompson said that, ‘I never intended gonzo journalism to be any more than just a differentiation of new journalism. I kind of knew it wasn’t that. Bill Cardoso – then working for the *Boston Globe* – wrote me a note about the Kentucky Derby thing [“The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved,” *Scanlan’s Monthly*, June 1970] saying, “Hot damn. Kick ass. It was pure gonzo.”’<sup>78</sup> The word originated in either Italian for ‘fool’ or the Spanish *ganso* which literally means ‘goose’ but by implication ‘idiot’. The term appears early in the novella (in addition to the name of Duke’s attorney, Dr. Gonzo) when Thompson writes:

The only way to prepare for a trip like this, I felt, was to dress up like human Peacocks and get crazy, then screech off across the desert and *cover the story*. Never lose sight of the primary responsibility.

But what *was* the story? Nobody had bothered to say. So we would have to drum it up on our own. Free Enterprise. The American Dream. Horatio Alger gone mad on drugs in Las Vegas. Do it *now*: pure Gonzo journalism.<sup>79</sup>

The same final phrase, “pure Gonzo journalism”, also appears early on in the film adaptation. *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* is quintessential Gonzo journalism because, while it is ostensibly concerned with the Mint 400 motorcycle race and the National District Attorney’s Conference on Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, it quickly departs from any genuine consideration of either the race or the conference and instead follows Thompson (as Raoul Duke) and Oscar Zeta Acosta (as Dr. Gonzo, his Samoan attorney<sup>80</sup>) around Las Vegas on a drug-fuelled rampage of manic destruction.

In ‘Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas’, Thompson, like Kerouac, cloaked real events in a mythic realm where the verisimilitude of journalism encounters the juiced-up rhetorical style that had become his trademark. It was journalism as bricolage [the process by

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<sup>77</sup> Makins, et al. (eds.), *Collins Concise Dictionary* p.549

<sup>78</sup> Wenner, *The Rolling Stone Interviews* p.395

<sup>79</sup> Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* p.12

<sup>80</sup> In actuality Oscar Zeta Acosta was a Chicano; Thompson thought it read better with Dr. Gonzo as a Samoan.

which preexistent fragments of artifacts are rearranged to form a new artifact]: he moved around freely in space and time, moving from internal acid monologues to brittle comic scenes, contrasting the high times in San Francisco with the gold-lamé depravity of Vegas, always searching in vain for the American Dream.<sup>81</sup>

This “searching in vain for the American Dream” reaches its comic crescendo in Chapter Nine of Part Two, ‘Breakdown on Paradise Blvd.’. It begins with an,

‘EDITOR’S NOTE:

*At this point in the chronology, Dr. Duke appears to have broken down completely; the original manuscript is so splintered that we were forced to seek out the original tape recording and transcribe it verbatim. We made no attempt to edit this section, and Dr. Duke refused even to read it. There was no way to reach him. The only address/contact we had, during this period, was a mobile phone unit somewhere on Highway 61 – and all efforts to reach Duke at that number proved futile.’<sup>82</sup>*

In this chapter we find what is certainly some of the funniest writing in the entire novella; unfortunately it does not find its way into Gilliam’s film adaptation. The following dialogue occurs at a taco stand in North Las Vegas:

*Att’y*: Let me explain it to you, let me run it down just briefly if I can. We’re looking for the American Dream, and we were told it was somewhere in this area... Well, we’re here looking for it, ‘cause they sent us out here all the way from San Francisco to look for it. That’s why they gave us this white Cadillac, they figure that we could catch up with it in that...

*Waitress*: Hey Lou, you know where the American Dream is?

*Att’y* (to Duke): She’s asking the cook if he knows where the American Dream is.

*Waitress*: Five tacos, one taco burger. Do you know where the American Dream is?

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<sup>81</sup> Weingarten, Marc, *Who’s Afraid of Tom Wolfe? How New Journalism Rewrote the World* Aurum Press, London, 2005 p.234

<sup>82</sup> Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* p.161

*Lou:* What's that? What is it?

*Att'y:* Well, we don't know, we were sent out here from San Francisco to look for the American Dream, by a magazine, to cover it.

*Lou:* Oh, you mean a place.

*Att'y:* A place called the American Dream.

*Lou:* Is that the old Psychiatrist's Club?

*Waitress:* I think so.' <sup>83</sup>

The chapter ends with another comedic insertion,

EDITOR'S NOTE (cont.):

*Tape cassettes for the next sequence were impossible to transcribe due to some viscous liquid encrusted behind the heads. There is a certain consistency in the garbled sounds however, indicating that almost two hours later Dr. Duke and his attorney finally located what was left of the "Old Psychiatrist's Club" – a huge slab of cracked, scorched concrete in a vacant lot full of weeds. The owner of a gas station across the road said the place had "burned down about three years ago."* <sup>84</sup>

It is obvious that a considerable dose of satire occurs in this chapter. Two drug-fuelled miscreants are directed by a cook at a taco stand to the "American Dream", only to find that it has been burnt to the ground. The fact that it is "the old Psychiatrist's Club" may or may not be of significance, since the very idea of the American Dream is buried deeply within the American collective psyche. Even so, this chapter effectively illustrates the Quixotic quest Dr. Gonzo and his not-so-faithful squire are engaged in, taking them from the Circus-Circus casino which, '...is what the whole hep world would be doing on Saturday night if the Nazis had won the war. [It] is the Sixth Reich.' <sup>85</sup> to: '...the shoddy limbo of North Vegas...out there with the gunsels, the hustlers, the drug cripples and all the other losers.' <sup>86</sup> Clearly the

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<sup>83</sup> Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* pp.164-5

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.* p.168

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.* p.46

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.* p.156

two anti-heroes engage themselves in a wide variety of landscapes and situations: if Raoul Duke and Dr. Gonzo's adventures in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, whether in the novella or the filmic adaptation, may specifically be termed "quixotic", they may certainly be termed "picaresque". Picaresque is derived from the Spanish word *pícaro*, which means 'rogue'. One would be hard pressed to argue that the two primary characters in the novella and film are not rogues.

There was a fantastic universal sense that whatever we were doing was *right*, that we were winning...

And that, I think, was the handle – that sense of inevitable victory over the forces of Old and Evil. Not in any mean or military sense; we didn't need that. Our energy would simply *prevail*. There was no point in fighting – on our side or theirs. We had all the momentum; we were riding the crest of a high and beautiful wave...

So now, less than five years later, you can go up on a steep hill in Las Vegas and look West, and with the right kind of eyes you can almost *see* the high-water mark – that place where the wave finally broke and rolled back.<sup>87</sup>

I regard this preceding paragraph as being one of both the most pertinent and most evocative in the entire novella: its inclusion by voice-over in Gilliam's adaptation creates an equally interesting cinematic scene. It is an example of the incredibly pithy, succinct statements that Thompson is capable of writing at his best, as well as addressing what I have already mentioned as being the primary thematic strand in the narrative: the uneasy transition between the hedonistic idealism of the 1960s and the pragmatic realism of the 1970s. In some ways Hunter S. Thompson also acts as a sort of transitional entity, between the Beat Generation writers of the 1950s, such as William S. Burroughs and Jack Kerouac, and the so-called "cult" or "underground" writers of the 1970s such as Richard Brautigan and Charles Bukowski. In his seminal book on New Journalism, Marc Weingarten claims:

(Oscar Zeta) Acosta rented a Chrysler convertible and acquired a prodigious supply of drugs and booze, and Thompson pointed the car east towards the desert.

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<sup>87</sup> Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* p.68

Jack Kerouac was in Hunter's head when he pressed his foot to the accelerator of the 'great red shark', heading east on Interstate 15.<sup>88</sup>

Clearly the similarities which exist between Thompson's novella and that great twentieth-century American road novel, Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957), are not accidental. Nor do I believe that a comparison between *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605-15) is clutching at straws. As Bluestone puts it:

In *Don Quixote*, the mock hero continually confuses illusion and reality, but the reader is never in doubt about the distinction between armored knights and windmills.<sup>89</sup>

Thus when Raoul Duke sees hordes of bats flying about the car, or gigantic lizards in the hotel bar, or a giant electric snake in the sky, we are naturally not meant to take these hallucinations as being literal but rather as manifestations of a drug-addled mind, just as the Don's hallucinations are symptoms of his obsession with Romances. Duke is indeed a quixotic figure, with his not-so-faithful squire Dr. Gonzo by his side acting as Sancho Panza and, initially, the Red Shark, then the White Whale, as his steed Rocinante.

“KILL THE BODY AND THE  
HEAD WILL DIE”

This line appears in my notebook, for some reason. Perhaps some connection with Joe Frazier. Is he still alive? Still able to talk? I watched that fight in Seattle – horribly twisted about four seats down from the Governor. A very painful experience in every way, a proper end to the Sixties: Tim Leary a prisoner of Eldridge Cleaver in Algeria, Bob Dylan clipping coupons in Greenwich Village, both Kennedys murdered by mutants, Owsley folding napkins on Terminal Island, and finally Cassius/Ali belted

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<sup>88</sup> Weingarten, *Who's Afraid of Tom Wolfe?* p.231

<sup>89</sup> Bluestone, George, *Novels into Film*

University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973 (1957) p.11



incredibly off his pedestal by a human hamburger, a man on the verge of death. Joe Frazier, like Nixon, had finally prevailed for reasons that people like me refused to understand – at least not out loud.

. . . But that was some other era, burned out and long gone from the brutish realities of this foul year of Our Lord, 1971. A lot of things had changed in those years.<sup>90</sup>

Raoul Duke connects this initial phrase with the heavyweight boxer Joe Frazier, but the allusion could just as easily suggest the extreme physical punishment both he and Dr. Gonzo submit themselves to whilst in Las Vegas, primarily through the ingestion of all manner of illicit substances and the legally compromising situations they put themselves through. As may be evident from both the previous quotation and from a number of the other citations culled from the novella, Thompson is prone to what may be termed “cultural namedropping”, perhaps symptomatic of his occupation as a journalist – after all, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* is journalism, albeit of a variety never quite witnessed before. His extensive lists of both famous and infamous cultural figures of the 1960s and early 1970s are nothing if not eclectic: they include boxers Cassius Clay/Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier; writers Allen Ginsberg and Ken Kesey; drug gurus Timothy Leary and Owsley “Bear” Stanley; political figures the Kennedy brothers, Richard Nixon, Spiro Agnew and Eldridge Cleaver; and musician Bob Dylan. Only a handful of names are mentioned in Gilliam’s adaptation (for example in the following voice-over by Raoul Duke, ‘This was Bob Hope’s turf. Frank Sinatra’s. Spiro Agnew’s.’<sup>91</sup>), but for the most part Gilliam confines himself to the cultural, social and political climate of the late 1960s and early 1970s in a considerably more generalised manner than Thompson. The reason for this decision seems clear enough. As the decades have passed, the social and cultural imperative to list all of the key players in significant American events has faded away. What for Thompson was a journalistic requirement would for Gilliam be a burdensome belabouring of the narrative.

Gilliam does, however, include a significant amount of the specifically journalistic elements which are scattered throughout Thompson’s novella. This is particularly evident when, in the opening scene of the film, a radio news reporter discusses the drug-related deaths of American GI’s in Vietnam: this is darkly humorous because Duke and Gonzo are

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<sup>90</sup> Thompson, *Fear and Loathing* pp.22-3

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.* pp.22-3

high on drugs at the time. This scene has its basis in a significantly later section of the novella, at the end of Chapter Nine, where Thompson includes to varying extents five different news articles in a paper Duke is reading. As Duke says,

Reading the front page made me feel a lot better. Against that heinous background, my crimes were pale and meaningless. I was a relatively respectable citizen – a multiple felon, perhaps, but certainly not dangerous. And when the Great Scorer came to write against my name, that would surely make a difference.<sup>92</sup>

It is necessary to note the importance of narrative unreliability in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Overt examples of it arise with relative frequency, and it could be argued that the entire text is unreliable due to its narrator, Raoul Duke, being under the influence of drugs for the greater part of the narrative. Narrative unreliability refers to the degree of trust readers may reasonably place upon the accuracy of the information provided by an author's voice. I have previously mentioned narrative unreliability in regard to *American Psycho*; in that instance Bret Easton Ellis utilised it in order to illustrate the increasing psychosis experienced by his narrator, Patrick Bateman. The rhetorical device is used for a similar but not identical effect by Hunter S. Thompson: in spite of the text being so-called Gonzo journalism, Thompson as Duke still wishes to provide some illusion of "objective" account of his surroundings and situation, but the drugs counteract this ability.

I didn't even know who'd won the race. Maybe nobody. For all I knew, the whole spectacle had been aborted by a terrible riot – an orgy of senseless violence, kicked off by drunken hoodlums who refused to abide by the rules.

I wanted to plug this gap in my knowledge at the earliest opportunity: Pick up the L.A. *Times* and scour the sports section for a Mint 400 story. Get the details. Cover myself. Even on the Run, in the grip of a serious Fear . . .<sup>93</sup>

These two paragraphs present what could be seen as the epitome of Gonzo journalism: while ostensibly in Las Vegas in order to cover the Mint 400 motorcycle race for *Rolling Stone*

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<sup>92</sup> Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* p.74

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.* p.84

magazine, Thompson/Duke does not even know who, if anyone, won, and must fill in this glaring gap in his knowledge by reading an already published newspaper report of the race.

On the same page we get a sense of the narrative unreliability which exists in the novella as a result of Duke's dissolute antics whilst in Las Vegas:

...sweet Jesus, I am *tired!* I'm scared. I'm crazy. This culture has beaten me down. What the fuck am I *doing* out here? This is not even the story I was supposed to be working on. My agent warned me against it. All signs were negative – especially that evil Dwark with the pink telephone in the Polo Lounge. I should have stayed there . . . anything but *this*.<sup>94</sup>

Yet possibly the most overt example of narrative unreliability occurs earlier in the novella, between Dr. Gonzo threatening journalists in an escalator and Duke finding him in the hotel room bathtub, tripping on LSD with a knife.

What were we doing out here? What was the meaning of this trip? Did I actually have a big red convertible out there on the street? Was I just roaming around these Mint Hotel escalators in a drug frenzy of some kind, or had I really come out here to Las Vegas to work on a *story*?

I reached in my pocket for the room key; "1850," it said. At least that much was real.  
<sup>95</sup>

This sort of extreme unreliability on the part of the narrator, which in this particular instance reaches a solipsistic level, is replicated to some extent in the adaptation, such as in the sequence which follows, in the first scene of the film:

DUKE, sweating bullets, STARES AT THE HITCHHIKER in the rear view mirror.

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<sup>94</sup> Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* p.84

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.* p.56

DUKE (V/O)

How long could we maintain, I  
wondered. How long before one of  
us starts raving and jabbering at  
this boy? What will he think then?  
This same lonely desert was the  
last known home of the Manson family.

The HITCHHIKER's eyes notice a thin line of blood trickling down GONZO's neck.

DUKE (V/O)

Would he make that grim connection  
when my attorney starts screaming  
about bats and huge manta rays  
coming down on the car?

DUKE's mouth moves intermittently - sometimes in sync with the words, sometimes not.

DUKE (V/O)

If so - well, we'll just have to  
cut his head off and bury him  
somewhere. Because it goes without  
saying that we can't turn him loose.  
He'd report us at once to some kind  
of outback Nazi law enforcement  
agency, and they'll run us down

like dogs...

DUKE

(out loud to himself)

Jesus! Did I say that?

DUKE (V/O)

Or just think it? Was I talking?

Did they hear me? <sup>96</sup>

It is clear from this section of the screenplay that, even before they arrive in Las Vegas, Raoul Duke is involved in a continual process of self-questioning regarding his and Dr. Gonzo's absurd antics. Furthermore, not only are he and his attorney often unable to control their behavior but also their bodies. This is illustrated by the following passage in the novella – included in voice-over in the adaptation:

...the main advantage of ether [is] it makes you behave like the village drunkard in some early Irish novel . . .total loss of all basic motor skills: blurred vision, no balance, numb tongue – severance of all connection between the body and the brain. Which is interesting, because the brain continues to function more or less normally . . .you can actually *watch* yourself behaving in this terrible way, but you can't control it. <sup>97</sup>

One of the most pertinent and interesting instances of Duke's self-questioning occurs reasonably early in Part Two. Duke, after initially attempting to flee Las Vegas on account of the gigantic hotel room service bill which he and his attorney have run up, has returned in order to "cover" the National District Attorney's Conference.

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<sup>96</sup> Gilliam and Grisoni, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (9.07.2008) p.5

<sup>97</sup> Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* p.45

I felt like Othello. Here I'd only been in town a few hours, and we'd already laid the groundwork for a classic tragedy. The hero was doomed; he had already sown the seed of his own downfall . . .

But who was the Hero of this filthy drama?<sup>98</sup>

Of course, as the novella will eventually reveal – even though it has been obvious all along – there *is* no hero in this “filthy drama”, only an antihero: the author, Hunter S. Thompson, in the fictional guise of Raoul Duke. Notice what happens in the final two paragraphs of the novella:

“God’s mercy on you swine!” I shouted at two Marines coming out of the men’s room.

They looked at me, but said nothing. By this time I was laughing crazily. But it made no difference. I was just another fucked-up cleric with a bad heart. Shit, they’ll love me down at the Brown Palace. I took another big hit off the amyl, and by the time I got to the bar my heart was full of joy. I felt like a monster reincarnation of Horatio Alger . . . a Man on the Move, and just sick enough to be totally confident.<sup>99</sup>

However, in light of this distinct antiheroism existent within the novella, one may question what literary purpose it serves. The relatively frequent mentioning of Horatio Alger, such as in the above quotation, gives one clue: *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, as I addressed earlier in this chapter, is an unconventional meditation upon the possibility, and the disillusionment, of the American Dream. An important aspect of this dream has always been absolute freedom, and Duke and Dr. Gonzo pursue this abundant freedom to its absolute limit. Yet of course with freedom comes responsibility, and it is this responsibility for their actions which they are far less willing to undertake, and thus attempt to flee from it at every possible opportunity. They may be able to escape from the law and from hotel managers, yet ultimately they cannot flee from their own damaged mental and emotional states. Nor can they flee from the garish, depressing realities of Las Vegas:

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<sup>98</sup> Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* p.122

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.* p.204

“Let’s drive up to Reno and get a big tuna fish salad . . .hell, it won’t take long. Only about four hundred miles; no traffic out there on the desert . . .”

“Forget it,” he (Dr. Gonzo) said. “That’s *Army territory*. Bomb tests, nerve gas – we’d never make it.”

We wound up at a place called The Big Flip about halfway downtown. I had a “New York steak” for \$1.88. My attorney ordered the “Coyote Bush Basket” for \$2.09 . . .and after that we drank off a pot of watery “Golden West” coffee and watched four boozed-up cowboy types kick a faggot half to death between the pinball machines.<sup>100</sup>

This passage reveals more about the thematic content of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* than it may seem. There is the sheer difficulty of escaping from Las Vegas. When Raoul Duke attempts to return to Los Angeles at the end of Part One he is chased by a highway trooper, encounters the hitchhiker from the novella’s opening chapter, and is urged by his attorney via telephone to return to Las Vegas in order to attend the National District Attorney’s Conference on Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. In the above instance moreover it is his attorney, Dr. Gonzo, who talks him into remaining in Las Vegas by means of bringing up the military installations between there and Reno. While this warning is certainly drug paranoia, this was after all the height of America’s involvement in the Vietnam War (In Gilliam’s adaptation Duke, who is tripping on LSD in his hotel room after having just arriving in Las Vegas, hallucinates that the Portuguese photographer Lacerda is an American General, an image brought about by the war footage playing on the television).

However, this inability to escape is soon ameliorated by two of the great contributing motifs of the American Dream: capitalism and the cowboy<sup>101</sup>. This passage, in its entirety, presents a vision of the American heartland which rivals the taco stand/Old Psychiatrist’s Club dialogue which I presented earlier in this chapter. An honest, objective depiction of both the gaudiness and banality of Las Vegas is coupled with grotesque humour to represent the American Dream as both a limitless highway and a constricting cul-de-sac.

Having just described Las Vegas as belonging to the American “heartland”, it may seem like a curious turn of phrase, considering that the city has become synonymous with

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<sup>100</sup> Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* p.135

<sup>101</sup> A cynical leftist argument could suggest that rampant and violent homophobia is also an aspect of the ultra-conservative idea of the American Dream

hard drugs, prostitution and other undesirable elements. Clearly Las Vegas is not in the same league as Wichita or Boise. The following is Thompson's/Duke's take on the situation:

People like Sinatra and Dean Martin are still considered "far out" in Vegas. The "underground" newspaper here – the Las Vegas *Free Press* – is a cautious echo of *The People's World*, or maybe the *National Guardian*.

A week in Vegas is like stumbling into a Time Warp, a regression to the late fifties. Which is wholly understandable when you see the people who come here, the Big Spenders from places like Denver and Dallas. Along with the National Elks Club conventions (no niggers allowed) and the All-West Volunteer Sheepherders' Rally. These are people who go absolutely crazy at the sight of an old hooker stripping down to her pasties and prancing out on the runway to the big-beat sound of a dozen 50-year-old junkies kicking out the jams on "September Song."<sup>102</sup>

By the end of the narrative, both the reader and the viewer may well ask if Thompson/Duke has discovered the "American Dream"? Perhaps surprisingly, yes. It turns out to be located at the Circus-Circus Casino, which Raoul Duke returns to in order to purchase an ape from a man named Bruce Innes (this plan is thwarted when, shortly before he arrives at the casino, the ape attacks an old man). Duke's realisation is presented as follows:

"No point hanging around this town any longer. I have all I need. Anything else would only confuse me."

He (Bruce Innes) seemed surprised. "You *found* the American Dream?" he said. "In *this* town?"

I nodded. "We're sitting on the main nerve right now," I said. "You remember that story the manager told us about the owner of this place? How he always wanted to run away and join the circus when he was a kid?"

Bruce ordered two more beers. He looked over the casino for a moment, then shrugged. "Yeah, I see what you mean," he said. "Now the bastard has his *own* circus, and a license to steal, too." He nodded. "You're right – he's the model."

"Absolutely," I said. "It's pure Horatio Alger, all the way down to his attitude. I tried to have a talk with him, but some heavy-sounding dyke who claimed to be his

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<sup>102</sup> Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* p.156



Executive Secretary told me to fuck off. She said he hates the press worse than anything else in America.”

“Him and Spiro Agnew,” Bruce muttered.<sup>103</sup>

Considering that this American Dream component is such an intrinsic thematic strand within the novella, it is fascinating that Terry Gilliam did not include it within his filmic adaptation. The simple answer is to suggest that the relatively fixed length of a standard feature film does not permit it. While this may have been a factor, I do not believe this is the sole reason. Another reason may be that much of this “American Dream” content in the novella is presented in reasonably long dialogue passages, which would not suit the frenetic pace of Gilliam’s adaptation. Another reason is that Gilliam has chosen instead to concentrate upon the transition between the hippie/flower power idealism of the 1960s and the Nixonian pessimism of the 1970s, and thus make this the central thematic component of his film. So therefore, instead of Raoul Duke and Dr. Gonzo careening around Las Vegas attempting to (re)capture the essence of the American Dream, in the film they are engaged in some perverted attempt to (re)capture the essence of the 1960s. This latter *raison d’être* is far less effective, for it is clearly impossible: time is not stationary. It is for this reason that the film is a far less important cultural document than the novella. Distanced by decades from the social, cultural and political events which Thompson discusses, it subsequently does not possess anywhere near the same poignancy of the literary text and thus simply shows two drug addicts speeding around Las Vegas scaring innocent people and engaging in unabated hedonism. Which is certainly an aspect of Thompson’s novella, but there is also considerably more to it. In spite of this, Gilliam’s film has received a substantial amount of adulation, primarily from young people who never experienced the 1960s and ‘70s. However, it is Thompson’s novella which will remain an important historical text, a text which both illustrates the uneasy and unpleasant threshold between countercultural idealism and absolute power, and the uneasy and unpleasant search for the American Dream.

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<sup>103</sup> Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* p.191

## **Chapter Four: *The Shining*.**

It is understandable why the literary maxim “Write what you know” may not seemingly apply to Stephen King: after all he writes about such things as vampires, homicidal clowns, telepathy, cars – and not to mention hotels - which come to life. While it is true that many of King’s novels, novellas and short stories are set in his home state of Maine, and a number of his protagonists (and indeed, antagonists) are writers<sup>104</sup>, the autobiographical nature of his work is not necessarily widely appreciated. *The Shining* is an example of King’s strongly autobiographical novels.

Firstly, the novel’s antagonist, Jack Torrance, is both a writer and a former alcoholic, or at least former until the novel’s climax. Stephen King himself is a former alcoholic. Because of this (in addition to his consummate literary talent) he depicts Jack’s redescend into dipsomania with such fascinating realism. There are also numerous other factors in regard to the novel’s autobiographical nature.

For instance, at the beginning of the book is a prefatory disclaimer: ‘Some of the most beautiful resort hotels in the world are located in Colorado, but the hotel in these pages is based on none of them. The Overlook and the people associated with it exist wholly within the author’s imagination.’<sup>105</sup> Whether this disclaimer appeared as a result of legal obligation or authorial irony, neither of these sentences is factually correct. Following the publication of King’s first two novels, *Carrie* (1974) and *Salem’s Lot* (1975), both set in Maine, King wished to write a novel set elsewhere. Furthermore, he wished to visit the location personally. He settled on Boulder, Colorado. In Colorado he and his wife Tabitha stayed at the Stanley Hotel, located near the community of Estes Park at the foot of the Rocky Mountain National Park. Upon arriving at the end of the summer season, they found themselves the only two guests staying there – in Room 217, the room in King’s novel in which both Danny and Jack Torrance discover the corpse of a long-deceased lady in a bathtub. In Kubrick’s adaptation of the novel this was changed to Room 237 at the request of the owners of the Timberline Lodge

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<sup>104</sup> In addition to *The Shining* (1977), two other notable examples are *It* (1986) and *Misery* (1987)

<sup>105</sup> King, Stephen, *The Shining*

Hodder and Stoughton, Sevenoaks, 1989 (1977) p.5

- featured in the film's opening sequence - as this particular hotel has no Room 217 and thus people would not be detracted from staying in a "haunted" room.

After his wife had gone to bed, King walked about the hotel's empty hallways before being served drinks in the hotel bar by a bartender named Grady: in the novel and film he is both Jack's psychosis-provoked waiter who informs him that Halloran the cook has been summoned to the Overlook by Danny's "shining", and the hotel's former caretaker who succumbed to cabin fever and killed his wife and twin girls with an axe. Furthermore, like the "fictitious" Overlook Hotel, the Stanley Hotel possessed a remarkable guest list which included Teddy Roosevelt, Bob Dylan, Cary Grant, Doris Day, Billy Graham and, incredibly, Emperor Hirohito (in the novel's first paragraph the Overlook's manager Stuart Ullman tells Jack Torrance that, 'Vanderbilts have stayed here, and Rockefellers, and Astors, and Du Ponts. Four Presidents have stayed in the Presidential Suite. Wilson, Harding, Roosevelt, and Nixon.' <sup>106</sup>). By the time King had joined his wife in bed that first evening of their stay, the idea for *The Shining* was already conceived. There quite possibly exist further similarities between King's experiences at the actual Stanley Hotel and Jack Torrance and his family's at the fictional Overlook, but those which I have provided should indicate that the idea of *The Shining*, while primarily the product of King's imagination, also had its genesis in fact.

If it seems ironic that King prefaced a novel based significantly upon fact with a disclaimer that it is entirely fictitious, then by adding Stanley Kubrick's 1980 adaptation into this fact versus fiction equation - to quote cinema's immortal opening line - 'You ain't seen nothin' yet'. The supreme aesthetic irony is that Kubrick made an adaptation having very few voice-overs of a novel consisting almost entirely of voice-overs. In fact, the novel *The Shining* is essentially a narrative about voice-overs, i.e., it is about telepathy, precognition, and the descent into insanity. The novel's opening line reads, 'Jack Torrance thought: *Officious little prick.*' <sup>107</sup> and for much of the next four hundred-odd pages we are in the heads and in the thoughts of either Jack, his wife Wendy, their son Danny or the Overlook's cook Dick Halloran. A good example of this is the following:

For a moment he (Danny Torrance) lay on the bathroom floor, breathing hard.

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<sup>106</sup> King, *The Shining* p.12

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.* p.9

REDRUM.

MURDER.

REDRUM.

MURDER.

*(The Red Death held sway over all!)*

*(Unmask! Unmask!)*

And behind each glittering, lovely mask, the as-yet-unseen face of the shape that chased him down these dark alleyways, its red eyes widening, blank and homicidal.

Oh, he was afraid of what face might come to light when the time for unmasking came around at last.

*(DICK!)*

he screamed with all his might. His head seemed to shiver with the force of it.

*(!!! OH DICK OH PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE COME !!!)*

Above him the clock he had wound with the silver key continued to mark off the seconds and minutes and hours.<sup>108</sup>

This passage is just one of many throughout the novel illustrating the extent to which King directly provides the reader with the thoughts of various characters, and indeed the “thoughts” of the Overlook Hotel itself, generally presented in italics within brackets. In this instance, Danny is initially receiving the “shine” from the hotel in the form of lines from Edgar Allan Poe’s ‘The Masque of the Red Death’ (quite a lengthy passage from Poe’s story also features as an introductory quotation at the beginning of the novel). This is appropriate, as much of Poe’s horror and mystery writing concerns not just death but also a descent into insanity.<sup>109</sup>

Interestingly, Kubrick never once provides his viewers with these externalised thoughts; in his *The Shining* (1980) we only get characters doing things and characters saying things. There are also plenty of instances of characters *seeing things*: a torrent of blood emerging from the elevator, the two murdered twins (both played by Lisa Burns), Delbert

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<sup>108</sup> King, *The Shining* p.287

<sup>109</sup> Incidentally, Edgar Allan Poe’s writing also plays an important role in Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita* (1955), particularly his 1849 poem ‘Annabel Lee’.

Grady the waiter (Philip Stone), Lloyd the bartender (Joe Turkel), etc. but never telepathically *receiving* the hotel's shine in an aural manner. Why this may be so is suggested by George Bluestone in his seminal study *Novels into Film*:

The rendition of mental states – memory, dream, imagination – cannot be as adequately represented by film as by language. If the film has difficulty presenting streams of consciousness, it has even more difficulty presenting states of mind which are defined precisely by the absence in them of the physical world. Conceptual imaging, by definition, has no existence in space.<sup>110</sup>

For this reason Kubrick chose to concentrate upon such visual features of the Overlook Hotel as the eerily long corridors, the enormity of the room in which Jack Torrance (played by Jack Nicholson) attempts to write his play, the maze-like kitchen (as Wendy Torrance (Shelley Duvall) says: 'This whole place is such an enormous maze I feel like I'll have to leave a trail of breadcrumbs every time I come in.'<sup>111</sup>), the garden maze itself – as well as specific hallucinations of individual characters. These cinematic images represent symbolically the mental state of the various characters. For example, when Jack Torrance stares down at the model replica of the maze, a shot which seamlessly dissolves to Wendy and Danny running through the actual labyrinth, this scene effectively and chillingly expresses the God-like control Jack has over the other members of his snow-bound family. Mario Falsetto discusses this aspect of the film in his book on Kubrick:

One of *The Shining*'s most impressive features is the way it carefully sets up comparisons between the interior spaces of the hotel and the exterior maze space. The film activates these interior and exterior spaces in several complex ways. Perhaps the most intriguing interpretation of the film's spatial strategies involves reading the space as a metaphorical landscape for Jack's (Jack Nicholson) deteriorating mind. The final

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<sup>110</sup> Bluestone, George, *Novels into Film*

University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973 (1957) p.47

<sup>111</sup> Johnson, Diane and Stanley Kubrick, *The Shining* July 1980 p.34



Fig. 3.1 *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980) Heeere's Johnny! The most iconic image in the film, as Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson) seeks his wife Wendy (Shelley Duvall).

nine-minute sequence of Jack chasing Danny through the maze could be viewed as a metaphor for Jack's frenzied mental condition and blocked creativity.<sup>112</sup>

The television miniseries of *The Shining* (Mick Garris, 1990), written and co-produced by Stephen King, attempts to enter character's heads directly via such devices as memories and dreams, but it is far less effective than Kubrick's adaptation, partly because of this. This difference between Stephen King's and Stanley Kubrick's visual imagining of *The Shining* is explained in King's Introduction to his novel:

My single conversation with the late Stanley Kubrick, about six months before he commenced filming on his version of *The Shining*, suggested that it was this quality about the story that appealed to him: what, exactly, is impelling Jack Torrance toward murder in the winter-isolated rooms and hallways of the Overlook Hotel? Is it undead people, or undead memories? Mr. Kubrick and I came to different conclusions (I *always* thought there were malevolent ghosts in the Overlook, driving Jack to the precipice), but perhaps those different conclusions are, in fact, the same. For aren't memories the true ghosts of our lives? Do they not drive all of us to words and acts we regret from time to time?<sup>113</sup>

Here the author broaches an intriguing aspect of the adaptation of his novel, for clearly Kubrick's version is not a conventional haunted house film. While it certainly contains aspects of supernatural horror, the film also possesses a significant amount of what may be termed psychological horror. As the above quotation further suggests, the manner in which King and Kubrick present their "ghosts" is radically different. In Kubrick's adaptation it is not entirely clear to what extent we are meant to take the ghosts as being either preexistent physical entities or actualised memories; King is decidedly clearer about their status as physical manifestations of suppressed memories. This clarity is illustrated in the following dialogue between Jack and Wendy:

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<sup>112</sup> Falsetto, Mario, *Stanley Kubrick: A Narrative and Stylistic Analysis* Praeger, Westport (CN), 2001 p.70

<sup>113</sup> King, Stephen, *The Shining*  
Hodder & Stoughton, London, 2001 (1977) p.xi

‘...maybe the Overlook has something...’

‘Ghosts?’

‘I don’t know. Not in the Algernon Blackwood sense, that’s for sure. More like the residues of the feelings of the people who have stayed here. Good things and bad things. In that sense, I suppose that every big hotel has got its ghosts. Especially the old ones.’

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The final shot of the film, a zoom shot, shows a photograph on a wall of the Overlook Hotel: Jack Torrance stands grinning ominously at the front of a large group of guests on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1921. By this means, Kubrick suggests that Delbert Grady is correct when he tells Jack Torrance that, ‘You have always been the caretaker.’<sup>115</sup> Epistemologically, the narrative of *The Shining* constitutes a logical impossibility. Jack Torrance could not accept a job as the winter caretaker at the Overlook Hotel, but have always been there. Likewise, the ghostly Grady can not be both the waiter and the former caretaker who murdered his family and committed suicide. Nevertheless, *The Shining* is a far more realistic horror movie than the vast majority of Hollywood horror films which are produced, in spite of its supernatural elements. Wendy Torrance may be a stereotypically hysterical, pre-liberated *hausfrau*, yet her concern for the welfare of her husband and son strike the viewer as genuine, primarily developed through the well-written screenplay. Likewise, Jack Torrance may evidently be a crazed psychopath from early on in the film’s narrative, yet we also witness him behaving tenderly towards his son Danny (Danny Lloyd).

Stephen King, however, was not convinced and has made his thoughts and feelings known on the matter:

I got the impression more and more every time I saw the picture that Kubrick really did not know how to show a warm relationship between this father and his son. There’s the scene in the bedroom where Jack takes Danny on his lap and tried to reassure the kid –

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<sup>114</sup> King, Stephen, *The Shining* (1989) p.248

<sup>115</sup> Johnson, Diane and Stanley Kubrick, *The Shining* July 1980 p.93



“I’d never hurt you; I’d never hurt your mother.” It’s very cold and stilted, and you have the feeling that it’s there because Kubrick knew that something had to be there at this point purely from a story perspective.<sup>116</sup>

Expanding upon the basic premise of the film’s fidelity to the novel to include both its generic conformity and novelty, another commentator, Steve Biodrowski, says that,

Widely reviled by Stephen King fans for abandoning much of the book (King himself said his feelings balanced out to zero) Stanley Kubrick’s film version...reveals that he took the same course he had often used in the past when adapting novels to the screen (such as Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita*): he stripped away the back story and exposition, distilling the results down to the basic narrative line, with the characters thus rendered in a more archetypal form. The result...[is] a brilliant, ambitious attempt to shoot a horror film without the Gothic trappings of shadows and cobwebs so often associated with the genre.<sup>117</sup>

Stanley Kubrick’s adaptation does include numerous so-called “Gothic trappings” of the horror genre: a haunted house (or rather hotel), the spirits or ghosts which haunt this hotel, an axe-wielding maniac. However, the fundamental thematic concern of the film is the dissolution of a domestic familial unit, caused by the dissolving of one man’s sanity through ‘...what the old-timers used to call cabin-fever, a kind of claustrophobic reaction which can occur when people are shut in together over long periods of time.’<sup>118</sup> It is this which provokes Jack Torrance to utter the Faustian pact, ‘God, I’d give anything for a drink. My Goddamn soul, just for a glass of beer.’<sup>119</sup> Jack Torrance’s alcoholism is significantly more important in Stephen King’s novel than it is in Stanley Kubrick’s film adaptation: in fact, in the novel it is one of the driving thematic concerns of the narrative. One reason why Jack

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<sup>116</sup> Magistrale, Tony, *Hollywood’s Stephen King*

Palgrave, New York, 2003 p.198

<sup>117</sup> Biodrowski, Steve, ‘The Shining’

<http://www.hollywoodgothique.com/shining1980.htm> (11.02.2009)

<sup>118</sup> Johnson and Kubrick, *The Shining* p.11

<sup>119</sup> *ibid.* p.71

Torrance accepts the job as the winter caretaker at the Overlook Hotel in order to escape from the drink-sodden demons of his past: breaking his son Danny's arm; beating up a former student of his, George Hatfield; being in the car of a drinking buddy of his, Al Shockley, when they hit a child's bicycle in the street. However, none of these events play a significant role in Kubrick's adaptation; nor does the role of Jack's deceased, alcoholic father, whom as a child Jack witnessed hospitalise his mother as a result of a drunken beating with a cane. In King's novel, Jack recollects this traumatic event, and in both the novel and the miniseries it is his father's voice emanating from the CB radio which provokes Jack to smash it apart. It is also his father whom Jack is imitating when he goes on his psychotic rampage with an axe/croquet mallet, screaming epithets such as "you damn pup" and "you little whelp." The difference is that in the novel Jack admits to smashing the CB radio himself when sleepwalking, while in the miniseries he blames it on his son Danny. In Kubrick's adaptation though, no such explanation is forthcoming, but the reason for him doing it is different. In the novel and miniseries, it is to prevent himself from hearing his dead father's voice, and in Kubrick's adaptation it is to prevent "outside parties" from intervening.

In this way Kubrick has effectively pared *The Shining's* narrative down to its most fundamental constituent elements. While King's novel is rather lengthy, somewhat convoluted, and possesses quite a large *dramatis personae*, Kubrick's adaptation is by comparison sparse, minimal and involving a dozen or so characters of any real significance. Kubrick has removed much of the back-story, such as Jack's long-term alcoholism, the events which have resulted from his drinking, his relationship with his deceased father, and Wendy's difficult relationship with her mother. Kubrick does, however, hint at Jack's having broken Danny's arm in the past, when Jack is speaking to Lloyd the barman:

M.C.S. LLOYD

JACK (OFF)

That damn bitch.

CUT TO:

M.C.S. JACK

JACK

As long as I live she'll never let  
me forget what happened!

He looks cam.L then cam.R -- throwing his hands out and  
sighing.

JACK

I did hurt him once, okay? It was  
an accident, complete unintentional.  
It could have happened to anybody.

He raps on counter with hand.

JACK

And it was three goddam years ago.  
The little fucker had thrown all my  
papers all over the floor. All I  
tried to do was to pull him up. A  
momentary loss of muscular  
coordination. I mean... A few  
extra foot pounds of energy, per  
second... per second.

JACK gestures with his hands.<sup>120</sup>

This passage is indicative of what Kubrick attempted to achieve in his adaptation of *The Shining*, and similarly with his adaptation of *Lolita*. He has chosen as his source material a lengthy, complicated novel but included in the completed film only the absolutely necessary events, thereby condensing the narrative to the extent that single scenes, or even single shots, convey an immense amount of information. The essential dilemma that Kubrick faced in adapting Stephen King's novel is succinctly stated by the author himself:

It's what I call the hotel towel problem: You steal all the towels in the hotel room and you try to get them into a single suitcase. You sit on it and move the towels around, and it still won't shut because you are working with too much material. It's a problem that all moviemakers have when they buy novels.<sup>121</sup>

What is genuinely remarkable about Kubrick's adaptation of *The Shining* is that its narrative is comprehensible at all, considering the massive bulk of novelistic material which had to be excluded from King's narrative. Certainly there are many incidents in the film which baffle and perplex even the most astute of critics, not least of all the film's final shot. However, it may be argued that Kubrick included such incidents because they *do* defy – or at least challenge – rational analysis. This is certainly a recurring aspect of his *oeuvre*: his films may be divided into those that conform to ordinary notions of narrative presentation - such as *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), *Lolita* (1962) and *Spartacus* (1960) - and those that do not - such as *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), *The Shining* (1980) and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Of all Kubrick's films (other than perhaps *2001*) *The Shining* is the most difficult to provide with a single, all-encompassing, definitive interpretation. As John Brown says about *The Shining*:

...the supernatural elements in *The Shining* are deliberately and subtly organised to *prevent* a single consistent interpretation of the ghosts and visions. The film in effect teases anyone who wants to practice this kind of critical analysis, by setting up various possible interpretations and then making them contradict one another. The process of

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<sup>120</sup> Johnson and Kubrick, *The Shining* pp.74-5

<sup>121</sup> King, Stephen, quoted in Magistrale's *Hollywood's Stephen King* p.8

decoding produces an unintelligible message, partly through conflicting evidence and partly through a lack of evidence, that artful series of gaps and off-screen events which we fail to register consciously or question while watching the film. This dead-end structure is one of the major sources of the film's unnerving quality, its downright weirdness. In other words, *The Shining* does not construct metaphors, it deconstructs them.<sup>122</sup>

Brown's argument partially explains why *The Shining* is such an unconventional horror film: it possesses myriad contradictions, an often frustrating unintelligibility, a dead-end structure, and a downright *weirdness*. In spite of all these factors – factors which would probably turn away the vast majority of cinemagoers – *The Shining* is fondly remembered by many audiences as being among the greatest horror films ever made. How can this be so? Partly, because unconventionality is what Kubrick does best. *The Shining* is an unconventional horror film but then, *Full Metal Jacket* is an unconventional war film; *A Clockwork Orange* and *2001: A Space Odyssey* are unconventional science fiction films; *Lolita* is an unconventional romance film. What is the common element uniting all of these films? They are all adaptations from literary sources<sup>123</sup>. Stanley Kubrick possessed an extraordinary talent at selecting an apposite literary text from which to extract a strong, cinematic narrative. Along the way he radically transformed the plot from the source material. He stayed true to the thematic spirit of the book (although perhaps this is debatable, as I will show, in regard to *A Clockwork Orange*) while incontrovertibly applying his distinctive aesthetic signature to the story. This ability is what constitutes the possibility of making a genuinely effective commentative adaptation of a novel, which will be appreciated both by audiences who have read the original source text and those who have never encountered it before.

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<sup>122</sup> Brown, John, 'The Impossible Object: Reflections on *The Shining*' in John Orr and Colin Nicholson (eds.), *Cinema & Fiction: New Modes of Adapting, 1950-90* (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1992) p.115

<sup>123</sup> So too are a number of Kubrick's other films, including *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), *Spartacus* (1960) and *Paths of Glory* (1957).

## **Chapter Five: *Lolita*.**

Vladimir Nabokov's epic novel *Lolita* (1955) belongs to an elite group of twentieth century novels which can genuinely be called an anatomy, 'from the Greek 'cutting up': A detailed analysis of a subject; an exhaustive examination. In his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) Northrop Frye treats 'anatomy' as a form of fiction associated with Menippean Satire, and thus a compendious, if not encyclopaedic, satirical analysis of human behavior, attitudes and beliefs.' <sup>124</sup>. In saying this, however, *Lolita*, while it does possess a significant amount of satire, should more properly be called a parody than a satire; this is an aspect of the novel which I will discuss in some depth later in this chapter. *Lolita* is anatomical in regard to, among other things, post-war American pop culture (read: kitsch) in the same way that Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* (1991) is anatomical in regard to late 1980s / early 1990s New York consumer culture. In David Lodge's words it is a,

novel-about-itself, the trick-novel, the game-novel, the puzzle-novel, the novel that leads the reader (who wishes naively only to be told what to believe) through a fairground of illusions and deceptions, distorting mirrors and trapdoors that open disconcertingly beneath his feet, leaving him ultimately not with any simple or reassuring message or meaning but with a paradox about the relationship of art to life.  
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<sup>124</sup> Cuddon, J. A., *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.  
Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1991 (1977) p.41

<sup>125</sup> Lodge, David, *The Novelist at the Crossroads*  
Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1971 reprinted in John Orr & Colin Nicholson's  
*Cinema & Fiction: New Modes of Adapting, 1950-90* Edinburgh University Press,  
Edinburgh, 1992 pp.118-9

In other words, *Lolita* is an early example of Postmodern fiction. According to Alfred Appel, Jr., who is without doubt one of, if not in fact the most, thorough of Nabokovian scholars,

A grand anthemion [‘a honeysuckle ornament, consisting of elaborate interlacements and expanding clusters’] entwines [Humbert’s] narrative, like some vast authorial watermark, and its outlines are traced by the elegantly ordered networks of alliterations, “coincidences,” narrative “inconsistencies,” lepidopterological references, “cryptocolors,” and shadows and glimpses of Quilty.<sup>126</sup>

*Lolita* consists of an immensely broad and intricate range of literary devices and features, and the manner in which Nabokov initially provides only the most fleeting glimpses of the novel’s antagonist, Clare Quilty, is constructed in a masterful manner. On a similar note, in the Introduction to his *The Annotated Lolita*, Appel states that,

...*Lolita* represents the apogee in fiction of Nabokov’s proclivities as anatomist and as such is a further reminder that the novel extends and develops themes and methods present in his work all along. Ranging from Dante to *Dick Tracy*, the allusions, puns, parodies, and pastiches in *Lolita* are controlled with a mastery unequalled by any writer since Joyce...<sup>127</sup>

Another Nabokov scholar, Page Stegner, in his *Escape into Aesthetics: The Art of Vladimir Nabokov*, describes *Lolita* as:

...a puzzle full of allusions and word plays, false scents and clues; it is a grotesque vision of billboard America, teen-age mores, and progressive-school education; and it is finally a moving story of ape-Humbert in his prison of impossible love (a love, as we

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<sup>126</sup> Nabokov, Vladimir (ed. by Alfred Appel, Jr.), *The Annotated Lolita*

Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London, 1993 (1955) p.352

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.* p.xlvii

shall see, for a lost childhood, resurrected for him by nymphets), painting the bars of his cage.<sup>128</sup>

As these quotations adequately illustrate *Lolita* is without doubt a novel concerned with a great many things. These include adolescent sexuality, beginning with the protagonist and narrator Humbert Humbert's continental love interest Annabel; beauty (Lolita) and the beast (Humbert and/or his nemesis and doppelgänger Clare Quilty); cruelty, and, 'the long hairy arm of coincidence'<sup>129</sup>; death, and desire, and deceit; eroticism, and *Enchanted Hunters*, and *Hunted Enchanters*, and *The Enchanted*, Nabokov's Russian-era novella which provided the catalyst for *Lolita*; food, and "McFate"; games; Humbert himself, and the homicide he both commits and wishes to commit; incest; juvenilia, and jealousy; kidnapping; Lolita, and language; motels and movies and music; nymphets and narcissism; obsession, and onanism; paedophilia, and psychoanalysis; Quilty, and the chess Queen (Lolita); revenge - in Humbert's case, certainly not served cold but with blood boiling hot; sex (and sadism – the two go hand-in-hand in the novel); travel, and theatre; the United States of America; virginity (or lack thereof), and Vivian Darkbloom, an anagram of Vladimir Nabokov; words; x-rated sex; youthful petulance; zoomorphism, and zugzwang, a position in chess in which one player can move only with a loss or severe disadvantage – chess, like lepidoptery, was one of Nabokov's great passions and its affect upon the novel is ubiquitous, from Humbert's comical games against the hapless homosexual Gaston Godin to the immense, epic game against Clare Quilty across the board of America: Quilty the king; Lolita the queen. However, the two supreme obsessions of this obsessive novel concerned with obsession are those

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<sup>128</sup> Stegner, Page, *Escape into Aesthetics: The Art of Vladimir Nabokov*  
Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1967 (1966) p.103

<sup>129</sup> Nabokov, Vladimir, *Lolita*  
Transworld Publishers, London, 1962 (1955) p.111



eternal bed partners, sex and death: 'Like the sweat of lust and guilt, the sweat of death trickles through *Lolita*.' <sup>130</sup>

Thus taking the all-encompassing scope of the novel into account, as the original trailer for Kubrick's 1962 adaptation asks, "How did they ever make a movie of *Lolita*?" The answer, both in regard to Kubrick's version and Adrian Lyne's 1997 adaptation, is twofold: one, by substantially altering the narrative structure, especially in regard to the beginning and end, and two, by excising at least eighty percent of the novel's content. As Kubrick himself said in regards to this particular adaptation process, 'The book is a masterpiece and we (with producer James B. Harris) weren't going to change that, but when you buy the rights to make a film, you use the book as background material.' <sup>131</sup> This comment echoes George Bluestone's statement that, 'What happens...when the filmist undertakes the adaptation of a novel, given the inevitable mutation, is that he does not convert the novel at all. What he adapts is a kind of paraphrase of the novel – the novel viewed as raw material.' <sup>132</sup> *Lolita* is such an immensely dense, complicated novel that it is inevitable that any adaptor must necessarily leave out a significant amount of its content: Vladimir Nabokov's original screenplay for Stanley Kubrick's adaptation would have run to about seven hours, which is obviously several hours longer than is permissible for a mainstream feature film. Kubrick made major cuts and edits to Nabokov's screenplay; in spite of this Nabokov was still credited as the screenwriter, and additionally received an Academy Award nomination for Best Adapted Screenplay.

Ideally, a hypothetical third adaptation of *Lolita* will comprise the lavish cinematography of Kubrick's version - but filmed in sumptuous high-contrast colour: the novel is after all full of garish motels and sentimentally schmaltzy pop songs and dot matrix

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<sup>130</sup> Amis, Martin, *The War Against Cliché: Essays and Reviews 1971-2000* Vintage, London, 2002 (2001) p.471

<sup>131</sup> Howard, James, *Stanley Kubrick Companion* B. T. Batsford, London, 1999 p.77

<sup>132</sup> Bluestone, George, *Novels into Film*

University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973 (1957) p.62

comic books (and a Peter Sellers-like actor as the perfect Quilty; his comic timing and physical humour can not be faulted) - with the narratological adherence (not transpositional, yet not analogous either: in other words, a true commentary) of Adrian Lyne's 1997 adaptation.

The primary problem facing any either potential or actual adaptor of *Lolita* is that, contrary to popular belief, it is not a novel almost solely concerned with a paedophile and his captive charge - risqué material for a studio film anyhow - but rather a novel about words, about language. As Nabokov himself wrote in the novel's postscript, 'On a Book Entitled *Lolita*', '...an American critic suggested that *Lolita* was the record of my love affair with the romantic novel. The substitution "English language" for "romantic novel" would make this elegant formula more correct.'<sup>133</sup> Like that great twentieth century Irish writer in exile James Joyce, Nabokov knew that form and content are fundamentally two inseparable entities, rather than oppositional binaries, and thus the sum total of *Lolita* – the novel in its entirety - is greater than its individual constituent parts (its individual words, sentences, paragraphs and chapters) as its parts are of such moral immensity.

In *Experience* [Martin] Amis relates the occasion when he had an argument with his father, Kingsley Amis, about Vladimir Nabokov's...novel *Lolita*. Martin admired it, Kingsley deplored it as, 'thoroughly bad in both senses: bad as a work of art, that is, and morally bad'. Martin Amis tells how he tackled his father over this, quoting sentences which he believed were, 'beautiful, dreadful, flinching and groaning with pain and grief', and which show us, 'the moral soul of the whole enterprise'. He goes on to tell us that his father's reaction was: 'That's just flimflam, diversionary stuff to make you think he cares. That's just style'. Whereas I would argue that style *is* morality: morality detailed, configured, intensified.<sup>134</sup>

By way of examples: Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are great through a combination of their lexical gigantism coupled with groundbreaking narrative dexterity

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<sup>133</sup> Nabokov, *Lolita* p.334

<sup>134</sup> Reynolds, Margaret & Jonathan Noakes, *Martin Amis: The Essential Guide* 2003

(‘*Lolita* is surely the most allusive and linguistically playful novel in English since *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939)...’<sup>135</sup>) In 1958 Thomas Molnar stated that,

Mr. Nabokov’s English is beautiful and immensely suggestive, espousing with the greatest ease the mood of men, the color of landscapes, the ambience of motels, girls’ schools, and small towns. It is an ocean of a language, now calm, limpid, transparent, then turning into a roar, with waves upon waves of scintillating metaphors, images, innovations, allusions. The author swims in this ocean like a smooth-bodied fish, leaving the pursuer-reader amidst a thousand delights.<sup>136</sup>

If style *is* morality, then *Lolita* may be considered one of the most important moral documents of the twentieth century, a hypothesis enforced by the fact that there existed such a furor in response to its widespread publication. Generally speaking, a substantial effort to suppress a work of art only occurs when it hits a moral nerve. *Lolita* certainly does just that.

It is during Humbert and Lolita’s stay at The Enchanted Hunters hotel that the elusive, chameleonic will-‘o-the-wisp Clare Quilty is first encountered. However this is certainly not the first time he is referred to: he is alluded to in the novel’s Foreword, in his *Who’s Who in the Limelight* biography in Chapter Eight, then ‘...Dr. Quilty. Uncle or cousin, I think, of the playwright.’<sup>137</sup>, a poster of him smoking a Drome cigarette on Lolita’s bedroom wall and finally, ‘...fat old Ivor in the ivory. He is really a freak, that man. Last time he told me a completely indecent story about his nephew.’<sup>138</sup>). During the stay at the The Enchanted Hunters the following passage – daunting to the average Anglophone – occurs:

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<sup>135</sup> Nabokov (ed. Alfred Appel, Jr.), *The Annotated Lolita* p.xi

<sup>136</sup> Molnar, Thomas, ‘Matter-of-Fact Confession of a Non-Penitent’ in *Commonweal* 24<sup>th</sup> October 1958 p.102 quoted in Greg Jenkins’ *Stanley Kubrick and the Art of Adaptation* McFarland, Jefferson (NC), 1997 pp.32-3

<sup>137</sup> Nabokov, *Lolita* p.67

<sup>138</sup> *ibid.* p.94

*Seva ascendes, pulsate, brulans, kitzelans, dementissima. Elevator clatterans, pausa, clatterans, populus in corridoro. Hanc nisi mors mihi adimet nemo! Juncea puellula, jo pensavo fondissime, nobserva nihil quidquam...*<sup>139</sup>

As this passage adequately illustrates, Humbert is a fearsome polyglot. The text contains a combination of Latin, French, German and Italian. Translated it means, ‘The sap ascendeth, pulsates, burning, itching (or by implication lusting, through a combination of the German *kitzel*, “inordinate desire”, and *kitzler*, “clitoris”), most insane. Elevator clattering, pausing, clattering, people in the corridor. No one but death would take this one (i.e., Lolita) away from me! Slender little girl, I thought most fondly, observing nothing at all...’<sup>140</sup>. Of course, considering that the vast majority of the audience of either the two extant adaptations of *Lolita*, or most likely of any hypothetical future version, would not understand a significant amount of any of these languages – particularly Latin – means that such a passage, in addition to the numerous smatterings of French and German littered throughout the novel, would have no chance whatsoever of finding its way into a cinematic adaptation.

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<sup>139</sup> Nabokov, *Lolita* p.127

<sup>140</sup> Nabokov (ed. Appel) *The Annotated Lolita* p.379



Fig. 4.1 *Lolita* (Stanley Kubrick, 1962) Entranced, Humbert Humbert (James Mason) is captivated by his juvenile love interest, Dolores Haze (Sue Lyon).

Chapter Two of Part Two is perhaps one of the most extraordinary chapters in the book, and certainly one of the chapters that best displays the anatomical nature of *Lolita*. It begins,

Now, in perusing what follows, the reader should bear in mind not only the general circuit as adumbrated above, with its many side-trips and tourist traps, secondary circles and skittish deviations, but also the fact that far from being an indolent *partie de plaisir*, our tour was a hard, twisted, teleological growth, whose sole *raison d'être* (these French clichés are symptomatic) was to keep my companion in passable humour from kiss to kiss.<sup>141</sup>

It ends, ‘“With your little claws, Lolita.”’<sup>142</sup>, one of many animal metaphors in the novel (Humbert often refers to himself as a “beast”, in contrast to his “beauty”, Lolita.) These include the extraordinarily evocative ‘I am like one of those inflated pale spiders you see in old gardens. Sitting in the middle of a luminous web and giving little jerks to this or that strand. My web is spread all over the house as I listen from my chair where I sit like a wily wizard. Is Lo in her room? Gently I tug on the silk. She is not.’<sup>143</sup> A few pages later we read, ‘My arms and legs were convex surfaces between which – rather than upon which – I slowly progressed by some neutral means of locomotion: Humbert the Wounded Spider.’<sup>144</sup> then ‘She had awakened at once, as fresh and strong as an octopus...’<sup>145</sup> ‘After a long stirless vigil, my tentacles moved towards her again, and this time the creak of the mattress did not awake her.’<sup>146</sup>, ‘Never had I thought I had such strong talons...’<sup>147</sup> ‘Remarkable how difficult it is to conceal things – especially when one’s wife keeps monkeying with the

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<sup>141</sup> Nabokov, *Lolita* pp.162-3

<sup>142</sup> *ibid.* p.174

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.* p.53

<sup>144</sup> *ibid.* p.58

<sup>145</sup> *ibid.* p.100

<sup>146</sup> *ibid.* p.137

<sup>147</sup> *ibid.* p.105

furniture.’<sup>148</sup> ‘I had a cup of hot flavourless coffee, bought a bunch of bananas for my monkey, and spent another ten minutes or so in a delicatessen store.’<sup>149</sup> and ‘With the monkeyish nimbleness that was so typical of that American nymphet, she snatched out of abstract grip the magazine I had opened (pity no film had recorded the curious pattern, the monogrammic linkage of our simultaneous or overlapping moves).’<sup>150</sup>

This last quotation is particularly instructive in regard to my argument: not only does it contain an animal metaphor, but it also contains an example of a filmic reference. Unlike psychoanalysis (‘Freudian voodooism...’<sup>151</sup>) and theatre (‘I detest the theatre as being a primitive and putrid form, historically speaking; a form that smacks of stone-age rites and communal nonsense...’<sup>152</sup>) which Nabokov is hostile towards on several occasions throughout the novel (and indeed, a number of his other novels), *Lolita* contains numerous instances where Nabokov uses cinematic terminology and references in the narrative. The above quotation is especially interesting as it apparently prefigures a filmic adaptation of the novel, much like a number of other passages in the novel, including, ‘If I close my eyes I see but an immobilized fraction of her, a cinematographic still, a sudden smooth nether loveliness, as with one knee up under her tartan skirt she sits tying her shoe.’<sup>153</sup> ‘Nothing prevented me from repeating a performance that affected her as little as if she were a photographic image rippling upon a screen and I a humble hunchback abusing myself in the dark,’<sup>154</sup> ‘I seemed to have shed my clothes and slipped into pyjamas with the kind of fantastic instantaneousness which is implied when in a cinematographic scene the process of changing is cut...’<sup>155</sup> ‘One had the impression of an old scenic film living its own life while piano or fiddle followed a line of music quite outside the shivering flower, the swaying

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<sup>148</sup> Nabokov, *Lolita* p.99

<sup>149</sup> *ibid.* pp.224-5

<sup>150</sup> *ibid.* p.61

<sup>151</sup> *ibid.* p.331

<sup>152</sup> *ibid.* p.211

<sup>153</sup> *ibid.* p.47

<sup>154</sup> *ibid.* p.66

<sup>155</sup> *ibid.* 135

branch.’<sup>156</sup> and ‘If you want to make a movie out of my book, have one of these faces gently melt into my own, while I look.’<sup>157</sup> This final quotation is undoubtedly the most intriguing as it reveals Nabokov directly addressing a hypothetical future adaptor of *Lolita*, and consequently creating a somewhat disconcerting self-referential effect; what is even more fascinating is that neither Stanley Kubrick nor Adrian Lyne followed his advice.

As may be expected, Kubrick’s film also features several cinematic references, although certainly nowhere near as many as are found within the novel. The most interesting occurs during the opening scene, which is actually the end of the narrative: Humbert (James Mason) asks Quilty (Peter Sellers), ‘Are you Quilty?’ to which Quilty replies, ‘No, I’m...Spartacus. You come to free the slaves or something?’<sup>158</sup>: Stanley Kubrick had directed *Spartacus* in 1960. Much of this opening dialogue, including this line of Sellers’, was ad-libbed, and it creates an intriguing self-referential effect on Kubrick’s part: appropriate for an adaptation of a postmodern novel. About forty minutes into the film, when Lolita (Sue Lyon) is inquiring about the secrecy of Humbert’s notebook, she asks, ‘Afraid somebody’s gonna steal your ideas and sell them to Hollywood, huh?’<sup>159</sup>

In the space of twelve pages, Humbert and Lolita (shadowed by Quilty) visit no less than sixty locations across the United States, painstakingly and meticulously recorded (even down to the various locations of their frequent arguments) by the ever-obsessive Humbert. While this ceaseless traversing of the American landscape could be translated into cinematic terms by use of montage, it would nevertheless still lose much of its effectiveness, relying as it does on the particularly literary technique of listing, which when converted into a cinematic formula can often be either mundane or pointless. Hence Kubrick simply uses a voice-over on the part of Humbert in order to convey this information.

Greg Jenkins discusses this particular section of the novel when he writes,

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<sup>156</sup> Nabokov, *Lolita* p.223

<sup>157</sup> *ibid.* p.234

<sup>158</sup> Kubrick, Stanley, *Lolita* (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1962)

<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*



...the film purges a long and significant section of the fictional tale: Humbert's (or Nabokov's) beautifully written record of the couple's "extensive travels all over the States". Their journey takes a full year, from August 1947 to August 1948, and consumes some 30 pages of the novel. A striking evocation of America, touching on many of its strengths and many of its foibles, the pertinent passage also dwells on the discord arising between the travelers...by omitting the travelog, which does little to propel the fabula forward – Kristin Thompson would term it a "free motif"<sup>160</sup> – and by transferring some of its friction to the toe-painting scene (which commences the film), Kubrick not only conserves time but captures, in diluted form, some of the original's jagged emotion.<sup>161</sup>

In regard to Nabokov's frequent use of metaphor, film theorist George Bluestone makes an interesting point in *Novels into Film* when he discusses the adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (directed by Robert Z. Leonard, 1940), which incidentally was co-written by Aldous Huxley:

In the first place, he [i.e., the director] is not troubled by the loss of style which we find, for example, when one adapts Emily Brontë and Liam O'Flaherty to the screen, since the metaphoric language on which these authors depend cannot be transmuted into the film medium. When an author depends on resemblances as an organizing principal, a large part of himself is inevitably left behind once the plastic replaces the literary mode. In the second place, the film-maker, given only clues in the narrative, is forced to fall back on his own resources, to invent his details for himself.<sup>162</sup>

If indeed it were true that, 'Alliteration is most frequently resorted to in intoxication'<sup>163</sup> then one would surely presume that Nabokov was near comatose for much of the period in which

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<sup>160</sup> Thompson, Kristin, *Breaking the Glass Armor: Neoformalist Film Analysis*  
Princeton University Press, Princeton (NJ), 1988 p.38

<sup>160</sup> Jenkins, Greg, *Stanley Kubrick and the Art of Adaptation: Three Novels, Three Films* McFarland, Jefferson (NC), 1997 p.55

<sup>160</sup> Bluestone, *Novels into Film* p.120

<sup>161</sup> Brophy, Brigid, Michael Levy & Charles Osborne, *Fifty Works of English Literature We Could do Without* Rapp & Carroll, London, 1967 p.4

he wrote *Lolita*, for the novel abounds in alliteration, assonance and sibilance. Of course, this quotation isn't true (or at least not necessarily so) for *Lolita* is one of the most controlled pieces of twentieth century prose, alliteration and sibilance especially providing much of its aesthetic interest. 'One of my favourite doctors, a charming cynical chap with a little brown beard, had a brother...' <sup>164</sup>, 'Desperate, dying Humbert patted her clumsily on her coccyx...' <sup>165</sup>, 'I turned off the highway up gravelly Grimm Road. For a couple of minutes all was dank, dark, dense forest.' <sup>166</sup> and,

So I tom-peeped across the hedges of years, into wan little windows. And when, by means of pitifully ardent, naively lascivious caresses, she of the noble nipple and massive thigh prepared me for the performance of my nightly duty, it was still a nymphet's scent that in despair I tried to pick up, as I bayed through the undergrowth of dark decaying forests. <sup>167</sup>

These are four good examples of Nabokov's extraordinary lyrical dexterity and incredible imaginativeness. Another, occurring upon Humbert's first laying eyes upon Lolita, is 'I passed by her in my adult disguise (a great big handsome hunk of movieland manhood)...' <sup>168</sup> This is interesting in that not only does it contain a double alliteration but also a further example of a cinematic reference; a few pages earlier, Humbert / Nabokov describes Charlotte Haze as, '...a weak solution of Marlene Dietrich.' <sup>169</sup>

Nabokov's attraction towards the magic of the movies, including his use of filmic terms and allusions in his fiction, has been discussed by a number of critics, one of whom is Robert Stam:

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<sup>164</sup> Nabokov, *Lolita* p.36

<sup>165</sup> *ibid.* p.42

<sup>166</sup> *ibid.* p.69

<sup>167</sup> *ibid.* p.81

<sup>168</sup> *ibid.* p.43

<sup>169</sup> *ibid.* p.40

Nabokov's imagination had always been shaped by the cinema. Already in the 1920s he was writing scenarios. In the early 1930s former Moscow art theater director Sergei Bertenson invited Nabokov to Hollywood to devise story lines. Both *Camera Obscura* in 1932 and the rewrite *Laughter in the Dark* in 1938 revolve around a man who falls in love with an usherette who dreams of becoming a film star. An early avatar of the Humbert Humbert character in the novel *The Enchanter* (1986) watches young girls at play but perceives only the "senselessly smooth movement of slow-motion film." (Nabokov, *The Enchanter*, trans. Dimitri Nabokov, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1986) Nabokov's *Bend Sinister* (1947) includes camera notations such as "photographed from above" and notes to the "actors."<sup>170</sup>

Readers are rewarded with their first cinematic reference on page 39: 'Possibilities of sweetness on technicolor beaches had been trickling through my spine for some time...' <sup>171</sup> Thenceforward we are provided with many more (in addition to the instances I have already mentioned): 'A modern child, an avid reader of movie magazines, an expert in dream-slow close-ups...' <sup>172</sup>; 'Idiot, triple idiot! I could have filmed her! I would have had her now with me, before my eyes, in the projection room of my pain and despair' <sup>173</sup> and,

In its published form, this book is being read, I assume, in the first years of A.D. 2000 (1935 plus eighty or ninety, live long, my love); and elderly readers will surely recall at this point the obligatory scene in the Westerns of their childhood. Our tussle, however, lacked the ox-stunning fisticuffs, the flying furniture. <sup>174</sup>

However, perhaps one of the most intriguing examples (all the more so for not actually directly mentioning the cinema) is,

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<sup>170</sup> Stam, Robert, *Literature through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation* Blackwell, Malden (MA), 2005 p.224

<sup>171</sup> Nabokov, *Lolita* p.39

<sup>172</sup> *ibid.* p.52

<sup>173</sup> *ibid.* p.243

<sup>174</sup> *ibid.* p.315

‘I have to put the impact of an instantaneous vision into a sequence of words; their physical accumulation in the page impairs the actual flash, the sharp unity of impression...’<sup>175</sup>

One would be hard pressed to locate a more accurate depiction of the fundamental disunity between the image and the word, the concrete and the abstract, in all of literature. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, the eighteenth-century German dramatist and theorist, discussed this issue in depth in his *Laocoön* (1766). The following passage coherently and succinctly addresses the issue of the intrinsic differences between pictures and words, as well as seemingly pre-empting semiotics as a field of theoretical study:

...if it is true that in its imitations painting uses completely different means or signs than does poetry, namely figures and colors in space rather than articulated sounds in time, and if these signs must indisputably bear a suitable relation to the thing signified, then signs existing in space can express only objects whose wholes or parts coexist, while signs that follow one another can express only objects whose wholes or parts are consecutive.<sup>176</sup>

By way of example: both Nabokov’s novel and his screenplay commence with a Foreword by John Ray, Jr. explaining Humbert Humbert’s perverted pathology. This is effective in the novel, but if it were included in a filmic adaptation it would be far too “talky” and uncinematic. Instead, Kubrick commences his adaptation with a close-up of Humbert painting Lolita’s toenails. While these two methods of presenting information concerning the central relationship in the narrative are remarkably different, they nevertheless convey the same basic piece of information regarding Humbert’s obsession with Lolita.

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<sup>175</sup> Nabokov, *Lolita* p.103

<sup>176</sup> Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim (trans. Edward Allen McCormick), *Laocoön*

The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1984 (1766) p.78

From beginning to end *Lolita* abounds in myriad cinematic references: some of them contain technical jargon, some of them allude to various genres of film; some of them merely provide interest to a scene, while some of them are aimed directly at a hypothetical adaptor of *Lolita*. These final examples are without doubt the most interesting, for it takes a writer possessing an extraordinary degree of confidence in his literary longevity to directly address a future director of his work. Vladimir Nabokov is such a writer.

*Lolita* contains a considerable amount of satire – much of it directed at Charlotte Haze's *poshlust*.

[Charlotte Haze]...is the essence of American *poshlust*, to use the "one pitiless [Russian] word" writes Nabokov in *Gogol*, (which) is able to express "the idea of a certain widespread defect for which the other three European languages I happen to know possess no special term." *Poshlust*: "the sound of the 'o' is as big as the plop of an elephant falling into a muddy pond and as round as the bosom of a bathing beauty on a German picture postcard." More precisely, it "is not only the obviously trashy but also the falsely important, the falsely beautiful, the falsely clever, the falsely attractive." It is an amalgam of pretentiousness and philistine vulgarity.<sup>177</sup>

The primary form of satire Nabokov uses in *Lolita* is parody ('To stress the satiric (rather than parodic) elements of *Lolita* above all others is as limited a response as to stop short with its sexual content. "Sex as an institution, sex as a general notion, sex as a problem, sex as a platitude – all this is something I find too tedious for words," Nabokov told an interviewer (somewhat ironically it would seem) from *Playboy*...' <sup>178</sup>). This is in spite of such passages as,

At first, Lo had refused "to try what it was like", but curiosity and camaraderie prevailed, and soon she and Barbara were doing it by turns with the silent, coarse and surly but indefatigable Charlie, who had as much sex appeal as a raw carrot but sported

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<sup>177</sup> Nabokov (ed. by Alfred Appel, Jr.), *The Annotated Lolita* pp.xlvii-i

<sup>178</sup> *ibid.* p.lii

a fascinating collection of contraceptives which he used to fish out of a third nearby lake, a considerably larger and more populous one, called Lake Climax...<sup>179</sup>

and,

Brown, naked, frail Lo, her narrow white buttocks to me, her sulky face to a door mirror, stood, arms akimbo, feet (in new slippers with pussy-fur tops) wide apart...<sup>180</sup>

*Lolita* is primarily a parody of the sensationalistic, “confessional” mode of writing, and of psychiatric reports. This aspect of the narrative, perhaps not surprisingly, is not included in either of the film adaptations of the novel, although Humbert’s pseudo-Freudian adolescent love affair with Annabel in Europe is included in Adrian Lyne’s 1997 version. The novel’s Foreword reveals that its full title is “*LOLITA, or the Confession of a White Widowed Male*,” and that it is written by John Ray, Jr., Ph.D. of Widworth, Massachusetts. In ‘The Enchanted Hunters’ sequence Nabokov provides the reader with, ‘Parody of a hotel corridor. Parody of silence and death. “Say, it’s our house number,” said cheerful Lo’<sup>181</sup> which as well as directly indicating to the reader the parodic nature of the book, also provides him with yet another pertinent coincidence. ‘In one sense *Lolita* might be considered an extensive parody of Freudian myths and Freudian explanations for psychological aberration.’<sup>182</sup>

This parody of a confessional psychiatric report, coupled with (distinctively Nabokovian) satiric jabs at Freudian psychoanalysis, is maintained throughout the novel.

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<sup>179</sup> Nabokov, *Lolita* pp.146-7

<sup>180</sup> *ibid.* p.147

<sup>181</sup> *ibid.* p.125

<sup>182</sup> Stegner, *Escape into Aesthetics* p.103

The child therapist in me (a fake, as most of them are – but no matter) regurgitated neo-Freudian hash and conjured up a dreaming and exaggerating Dolly in the “latency” period of girlhood.<sup>183</sup>

Early on we find the following example:

I want my learned readers to participate in the scene I am about to replay; I want them to examine its every detail and see for themselves how careful, how chaste, the whole wine-sweet event is if viewed with what my lawyer [...Clarence Choate Clark, Esq., now of the District of Columbia bar...]<sup>184</sup> has called, in a private talk we have had, “impartial sympathy”. So let us get started. I have a difficult job before me.<sup>185</sup>

This passage illustrates what I believe to be the three primary objections to *Lolita* as a work of art: one aesthetic, one political, and one ethical (the latter being far more valid than the former two). Aesthetically, an objection may be leveled against the novel on the grounds that it is “overwritten,” in that it often descends into purple prose: many of its allusions are too esoteric, many of its sentences are too ornate, many of its paragraphs are too verbose. James Joyce undertook a similar aesthetic project much more elegantly; Ernest Hemingway wrote about the perils of love, romance and physical attraction much more efficiently. ‘...it is all very well...to write simply and the simpler the better...Know how complicated it is and then state it simply.’<sup>186</sup> However, the novel from which this quotation is derived, *The Garden of Eden* (1986), clearly illustrates that simplicity is not necessarily always desirable, it being without doubt one of Hemingway’s least accomplished works. This brings to mind Martin Amis’ comment to his father which I quoted earlier, that style *is* morality: Humbert’s “symptomatic” French clichés, his interminable allusions and alliterations, his multifarious peccadilloes and flights of fancy all contribute to his character and, ultimately, to making

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<sup>183</sup> Nabokov, *Lolita* p.131

<sup>184</sup> *ibid.* p.5

<sup>185</sup> *ibid.* p.61

<sup>186</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Garden\\_of\\_Eden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Garden_of_Eden) (11/02/2009)

*Lolita* the novel that it is. As Humbert himself says in the first chapter of the novel, ‘You can always count on a murderer for a fancy prose style.’<sup>187</sup>

Amis’ comment introduces what is perhaps the most valid criticism of the novel: that it is morally and ethically repugnant. The fundamental question at stake is this: since by reading a novel you must necessarily engage with the narrator to some extent, and thus by engaging with the narrator must you necessarily sympathise with him to some extent? By engaging and thus by sympathising with Humbert, are we therefore in some way condoning or excusing his behavior? I do not believe so. To *empathise* with Humbert (to project our own personality into that of Humbert and thus to fully comprehend the object of his contemplation, his desire, his affection) would be immoral and thus inexcusable; however, to *sympathise* with Humbert is to simply be affected by the same feeling – the desire Humbert feels for Lolita can be equated with any normal human desire for an adult member of the opposite sex. Were it immoral to sympathise with Humbert, so too would it be immoral to sympathise with other narrators I have examined: Patrick Bateman, Raoul Duke, Alex DeLarge (Anthony Burgess’ final, twenty-first chapter of his novella would potentially take care of this moral quandary, as he in fact intended it to do so – however, that would consequently mean that it would be immoral to sympathise with Alex as the protagonist in Stanley Kubrick’s adaptation, as Kubrick did not include this “redemption” scene in his film – and by extension immoral to sympathise with many other Kubrick protagonists). Page Stegner presents an interesting analysis of the moral issue at stake in *Lolita*, which I will quote in its entirety:

While Humbert is a sexual pervert and a murderer, he is not a rapist; not a seducer of adolescent girls in dark alleys. He looks but, except for Lolita, he has not touched, and does not. Judging from the come-on that Lolita gives him while he is a boarder in her mother’s house, his statement that it is she who seduced him seems very possibly true – though it can never be forgotten that all this is reported by Hum. And the man whom Humbert kills is himself, a despicable creature; in the melodramatic terms that the extravaganza murder scene seems to parody, he “needs killing.” None of this, of course, should excuse Humbert, but it does certainly mitigate the degree of his culpability. It is useful to recall T. S. Eliot’s admonition to the critics of *Hamlet* that it is the play that is

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<sup>187</sup> Nabokov, *Lolita* p.11



at issue, not the man. *Lolita* amounts to a good deal more than Humbert's tragic flaw.  
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How does Humbert excuse his behaviour – and how does Lolita react?

“Look here. Lo. Let's settle this once for all. For all practical purposes I am your father. I have a feeling of great tenderness for you. In your mother's absence I am responsible for your welfare. We are not rich, and while we travel, we shall be obliged – we shall be thrown a good deal together. Two people sharing one room, inevitably enter into a kind – how shall I say – a kind –“

“The word is incest,” said Lo...<sup>189</sup>

Many a moral conservative would argue that a novel or film which allows readers and audiences the opportunity to sympathise with an immoral protagonist thereby allows people to regard such immoral actions as permissible. This is balderdash, for the three narrators I have previously mentioned all receive their comeuppance in similar fashion – namely, by suffering the descent into insanity. Immoral behavior must necessarily be depicted in the arts, but immoral actions must be punished and thus morality succeeds in eventually being the victor.

Now back to Nabokov's parody of psychoanalysis in *Lolita*. ‘We must remember that a pistol is the Freudian symbol of the Ur-father's central forelimb’<sup>190</sup> and,

Indeed, I could very well do with a little rest in this subdued, frightened to-death rocking chair, before I drove wherever the beast's lair was – and then pulled the pistol's foreskin back, and then enjoyed the orgasm of the crushed trigger: I was always a good little follower of the Viennese medicine man.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Stegner, *Escape into Aesthetics* p.109

<sup>189</sup> Nabokov, *Lolita* p.126

<sup>190</sup> *ibid.* p.228

<sup>191</sup> *ibid.* p.289

are rather obvious, yet nevertheless extremely effective, pugilistic punches at psychoanalysis, as is,

Mid-twentieth century ideas concerning child-parent relationships have been considerably tainted by the scholastic rigmarole and standardized symbols of the psycho-analytic racket, but I hope I am addressing myself to the unbiased readers.’<sup>192</sup>

However, Nabokov’s knock-out jab at ‘the psycho-analytic racket’ arrives in the novel’s Postscript, ‘On a Book Entitled *Lolita*’:

Although everybody should know that I detest symbols and allegories (which is due partly to my old feud with Freudian voodooism and partly to my loathing for generalizations devised by literary mythists and sociologists), an otherwise intelligent reader who flipped through the first part described *Lolita* as “Old Europe debauching young America”, while another flipper saw in it “Young American debauching old Europe”.<sup>193</sup>

‘A pistol is the Freudian symbol of the Ur-father’s central forelimb,’ ‘pulled the pistol’s foreskin back,’ ‘the scholastic rigmarole and standardized symbols of the psycho-analytic racket,’ ‘Freudian voodooism’: it does not require an exhaustive literary deconstruction in order to guess that Nabokov wasn’t exactly Freudianism’s biggest supporter. Yet, just in case one thinks that this attitude belongs solely to the fictional character of Humbert and not to Nabokov himself, here is a passage from the Foreword to Nabokov’s novella *The Eye* (*Soglyadatay*) (1965):

As is well known (to employ a famous Russian phrase), my books are not only blessed by a total lack of social significance, but are also mythproof: Freudians flutter around them avidly, approach with itching oviducts, stop, sniff, and recoil. A serious

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<sup>192</sup> Nabokov, *Lolita* p.300

<sup>193</sup> *ibid.* p.331

psychologist, on the other hand, may distinguish through my rain-sparkling  
crystograms a world of soul dissolution...<sup>194</sup>

Alfred Appel, Jr. discusses Nabokov's duel with Freudianism in the Introduction to  
his *The Annotated Lolita* when he states that,

By creating a surface that is rich in "psychological" clues, but which finally resists and  
then openly mocks the interpretations of depth psychology, Nabokov is able to dispatch  
any Freudians who choose to "play" in the blitzkrieg game that is the novel's first sixty-  
or-so pages.<sup>195</sup>

In the novel's opening chapter Humbert addresses the 'Ladies and gentlemen of the  
jury...' <sup>196</sup> and thenceforward he continues to do so relatively frequently. Nabokov does not  
wish for the reader to forget that this is a confessional testimony presented by a man who  
'Had died in legal captivity, of coronary thrombosis, on November 16, 1952, a few days  
before his trial was scheduled to start.' <sup>197</sup> Such an example of Humbert as narrator directly  
addressing his accusers includes, '...Suddenly, gentlemen of the jury, I felt a Dostoevskian  
grin dawning (through the very grimace that twisted my lips) like a distant and terrible sun.'  
<sup>198</sup>

It may be asked how Nabokov regarded Dostoyevsky as a writer, and in what  
estimation he held him. The answer is: in roughly the same regard as Freudianism.

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<sup>194</sup> Nabokov, Vladimir (trans. Dmitri Nabokov), *The Eye (Soglyadatay)*  
Penguin, London, 1992 (1965) p.9

<sup>195</sup> Nabokov, *The Annotated Lolita* p.lviii

<sup>196</sup> Nabokov, *Lolita* p.11

<sup>197</sup> *ibid.* p.5

<sup>198</sup> *ibid.* p.74

Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881), the famous Russian novelist, was long one of Nabokov's primary targets. In the *Playboy* interview (1964) he said, "Non-Russian readers do not realize two things; that not all Russians love Dostoyevsky as much as Americans do, and that most of those Russians who do, venerate him as a mystic and not as an artist. He was a prophet, a claptrap journalist and a slapdash comedian. I admit that some of his scenes, some of his tremendous, farcical rows are extraordinarily amusing. But his sensitive murderers and soulful prostitutes are not to be endured for one moment – by this reader anyway."<sup>199</sup>

By way of clarification, I will quote the following two (rather lengthy) paragraphs from Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1864) in order to illustrate just what Nabokov means by "sensitive murderers":

The first question he had been concerned with – a long time ago now – was why most crimes were so easily discovered and solved, and why nearly every criminal left so clear a trail. He arrived by degrees at a variety of curious conclusions, and, in his opinion, the chief cause lay not so much in the material impossibility of concealing the crime as in the criminal himself; nearly every criminal, at the moment of the crime, was subject to a collapse of will-power and reason, exchanging them for an extraordinarily childish heedlessness, and that just at the moment when judgment and caution were most indispensable. He was convinced that this eclipse of reason and failure of will attacked a man like an illness, developed gradually and reached their height shortly before the commission of the crime, continuing unchanged at the moment of commission and for some time, varying with the individual, afterwards; their subsequent course was that of any other disease. The further question whether the disease engenders the crime, or whether the nature of crime somehow results in its always being accompanied by some manifestation of disease, he did not feel competent to answer.

Having arrived at this conclusion, he decided that he personally would not be subject to any such morbid subversion, that his judgment and will would remain steadfast throughout the fulfillment of his plans, for the simple reason that what he contemplated was 'no crime'... We omit the course of reasoning by which he arrived at this latter verdict, since we have already run too far ahead... We shall add only that the practical, material difficulties played only a very secondary role in his thinking. 'It will suffice to concentrate my will and my judgment on them, and they will all be overcome, when the time comes, when I have to come to grips with all the details of the affair, down to the most minute...' But he made no progress towards action. He continued to have less and

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<sup>199</sup> Nabokov, *The Annotated Lolita* p.368

less faith in his final decisions, and when the hour struck, everything seemed to go awry, in a haphazard and almost completely unexpected way.<sup>200</sup>

By means of comparison, here is how Nabokov presents his “sensitive” criminal, Monsieur Humbert Humbert:

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, the majority of sex offenders that hanker for some throbbing, sweet-moaning, physical but not necessarily coital, relation with a girl-child, are innocuous, inadequate, passive, timid strangers who merely ask the community to allow them to pursue their practically harmless, so-called aberrant behaviour, their little hot wet private acts of sexual deviation without the police and society cracking down upon them. We are not sex fiends! We do not rape as good soldiers do. We are unhappy, mild, dog-eyed gentlemen, sufficiently well integrated to control our urge in the presence of adults, but ready to give years and years of life for one chance to touch a nymphet. Emphatically, no killers are we. Poets never kill...

...now comes the point of my perfect-crime parable.<sup>201</sup>

Note, once again, Humbert’s use of ‘Ladies and gentlemen of the jury,’ particularly relevant on this occasion as he is “testifying” to the essential harmlessness of pedophilic sex offenders! The differences between Nabokov’s and Dostoyevsky’s respective styles are immense, although they do share at least one unifying strand - a black humour verging on the absurd. Note also that both Dostoyevsky’s and Nabokov’s protagonists do not consider their crimes to be genuine criminal acts: these conclusions are arrived at not through an absence of moral judgment, but rather through a process of “logical” reasoning. Dostoyevsky, for example, discusses the ‘eclipse of reason and failure of will,’ while Humbert is not just ‘sufficiently well integrated’ but a poet to boot. Clearly these are not in any sense intended to be “ordinary” criminals.

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<sup>200</sup> Dostoyevsky, Fyodor (trans. by Jessie Coulson), *Crime and Punishment* (1864)  
Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1980 (1953) p.68

<sup>201</sup> Nabokov, *Lolita* p.93

In both Kubrick and Lyne's adaptations of *Lolita* Humbert's plan to drown Charlotte Haze (played by Shelley Winters in Kubrick's adaptation and Melanie Griffith in Lyne's adaptation) in Hourglass Lake is not retained: instead, in Kubrick's version, he plans to shoot her in her bath with Charlotte's late husband's, Harold Haze's, pistol, '...but what do you know folks? I just couldn't make myself [Humbert] do it.'<sup>202</sup> However, coincidence soon intercedes when she reads his diary, runs out into the street and is killed by a passing car.

Immediately preceding Humbert's aborted murder plan – roughly an hour into the film – he muses in a voice-over: 'No man can bring about the perfect murder. Chance, however, can do it.'<sup>203</sup> *Lolita* – primarily the novel but still to some extent the films – contains a great deal of coincidence, and chance, and circumstance: in fact, the novel in particular is very much concerned with these topics, and the death of Charlotte Haze is the most prominent – and important – example of this. It acts as a catalyst by which the narrative is propelled forward dramatically. Humbert may now travel to Camp Q and be reunited with his "darling daughter." If this aspect of the novel is doubted, attention may be paid to the conclusion of Chapter Twenty Three, wherein Humbert discovers Charlotte's corpse by the roadside:

...nothing might have happened, had not precise fate, that synchronizing phantom, mixed within its alembic the car and the dog and the sun and the shade and the wet and the weak and the strong and the stone. Adieu, Marlene! Fat fate's formal handshake (as reproduced by Beale before leaving the room) brought me out of my torpor; and I wept. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury – I wept.<sup>204</sup>

In addition to that recurring phrase, 'Ladies and gentlemen of the jury,' fate is mentioned twice within consecutive sentences. This is comparable to the following passage, occurring within the opening paragraph of Chapter 25:

Instead of basking in the beams of smiling Chance I was obsessed by all sorts of purely ethical doubts and fears. For instance: might it not surprise people that Lo was so consistently debarred from attending festive and funeral functions in her immediate

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<sup>202</sup> Kubrick, *Lolita*

<sup>203</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> *ibid.* p.109

family? You remember – we had not had her at our wedding. Or another thing: granted it was the long hairy arm of Coincidence that had reached out to remove an innocent woman, might Coincidence not ignore in a heathen moment what its twin limb had done and hand Lo a premature note of commiseration?<sup>205</sup>

Although brief, this passage consists of quite a number of specifically literary features, namely alliteration ('...basking in the beams...', '...festive and funeral functions in her immediate family...') and metaphors ('...smiling Chance...', '...the long hairy arm of Coincidence...') Note that Nabokov capitalises Chance and Coincidence, both to further create the illusion that they are living, animate objects involved in the lives of Humbert and those around him, and also to bring attention to their importance within the narrative. Humbert also muses upon the ethics of his situation, as he does on other occasions in the novel. Combined, these features add up to make a passage which would be extremely difficult – even impossible – to convert into a cinematic format, even in voice-over. Yet Kubrick utilised a surprisingly small number of voice-overs in his adaptation of the novel, especially considering that the novel is told in the first person and much of the narrative is based upon diary excerpts.

While Nabokov's original screenplay opening made extensive use of voice-over, Kubrick was surprisingly stingy in employing a device that directors adapting novels often use excessively. Mario Falsetto observes that, of the thirty-five narrative units or scenes, often five involve Humbert's voice-over. One shows Humbert writing in his diary, and the other four are direct addresses to the viewer.

I will quote the opening two paragraphs of Part Two in their entirety, for I believe they effectively illustrate the fundamental dilemma faced by an adaptor of *Lolita*:

It was then that we began our extensive travels all over the States. To any other type of tourist accommodation I soon grew to prefer the Functional Motel – clean, net, safe nooks, ideal places for sleep, argument, reconciliation, insatiable illicit love. At first, in my dread of arousing suspicion, I would eagerly pay for both sections of one double

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<sup>205</sup> Nabokov, *Lolita* p.111

unit, each containing a double bed. I wondered what type of foursome this arrangement was ever intended for, since only a pharisaic parody of privacy could be attained by means of the incomplete partition dividing the cabin or room into two communicating love nests. By and by, the very possibilities that such honest promiscuity suggested (two young couples merrily swapping mates or a child shamming sleep to ear-witness primal sonorities) made me bolder, and every now and then I would take a bed-and-cot or twin-bed cabin, a prison cell of paradise, with yellow window shades pulled down to create a morning illusion of Venice and sunshine when actually it was Pennsylvania and rain.

We came to know – *nous connûmes*, to use a Flaubertian intonation – the stone cottages under enormous Chateaubrianesque trees, the brick unit, the abode unit, the stucco court, on what the Tour book of the Automobile Association describes as “shaded” or “spacious” or “landscaped” grounds. The log kind, finished in knotty pine, reminded Lo, by its golden-brown glaze, of fried chicken bones. We held in contempt the plain whitewashed clapboard Kabins, with their faint sewerish smell or some other gloomy self-conscious stench and nothing to boast of (except “good beds”), and an unsmiling landlady always prepared to have her gift (“...well, I could give you...”) turned down.<sup>206</sup>

These two paragraphs act as something of a checklist of reasons why a “definitive” cinematic adaptation of *Lolita* will in all probability never be made. They contain a variety of literary devices which could either not be utilised in a film or, if they were, would be extremely uncinematic. These include extensive alliteration (‘pharisaic parody of privacy’ – note once again the parody – and ‘prison cell of paradise’), sibilance (‘sewerish smell or some other gloomy self-conscious stench’), quotation marks (‘ “shaded” or “spacious” or “landscaped” ’ – a further example of sibilance), capitalisation (‘Functional Motel,’ ‘Kabins’) and the use of expressions (‘*nous connûmes*’) and references (‘Flaubertain,’ ‘Chateaubrianesque’) which would not be understood by a significant proportion of the film-going public. If a reader does not understand a word or reference they may simply reach for a dictionary or encyclopaedia; the viewer in a darkened cinema does not possess such a form of recourse. Of course, much of mainstream cinema targets the lowest common denominator as far as the intended audience is concerned, and thus does not attempt to intellectually challenge or engage its viewers. While neither adaptation of *Lolita* could be said to be unintelligent, nor can they be match for the sophisticated, layered intertextualities, allusions and literary games exhibited within the novel. Even the briefest glance at the annotations

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<sup>206</sup> Nabokov, *Lolita* p.153



provided with *Lolita* clearly indicates that it possesses more than an average degree of narrative complexity and allusiveness.

Anthony Burgess years ago made the distinction between what he calls the ‘A-type novel’ and the ‘B-type novel’. The ‘A-type novel’ being characterised by a strong narrative, characters, human interest; the ‘B novel’ being more an order of words. The ultimate ‘B novel’ is *Finnegan’s Wake*, and most literary writers are somewhere between the ‘A’ and the ‘B’ <sup>207</sup>

*Lolita* is without any doubt whatsoever an ‘A-type novel’. Thus, any adaptor of *Lolita* must take this into account and subsequently accept that a film version will have to omit the vast majority of the novel’s literary content. This does not inherently mean that an extremely effective and entertaining adaptation cannot be made. Nor does it mean that a “faithful” adaptation cannot be made. What it does mean though is that both a writer and director must be extraordinarily selective in regards to what they include in the completed adaptation. Attempting to include over three hundred pages worth of - often rather arcane or esoteric - information into a ninety to a one-hundred-and-twenty minute long feature film is certainly an immensely difficult task, not taking into account the unusually risqué subject matter of *Lolita*. Hence it takes a director possessing an extraordinary amount of intelligence and foresight to attempt to make a movie of *Lolita*: Adrian Lyne and (especially) Stanley Kubrick are two such directors. I have previously mentioned the adage “a great book often makes a poor film, but a poor book often makes a great film.” Clearly *Lolita* is a great book, and while a great adaptation has not yet been made (and quite possibly never could be) it is nevertheless pleasing that two extremely good film versions have thus far been produced.

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<sup>207</sup> Reynolds, Margaret & Jonathan Noakes, *Martin Amis: The Essential Guide* Penguin, London, 2003 pp.14-5

## **Chapter Six: A Clockwork Orange.**

Anthony Burgess, author of *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), has been quoted as saying, ‘To write well you have to touch pitch and be defiled. Novels are a record of what life’s like. The lower depths – squalor – vomit – defecation – drinking.’<sup>208</sup> This statement certainly possesses an element of truth, and furthermore could be applied not just to Burgess – specifically in relation to his writing of *A Clockwork Orange* – but quite possibly to all of the other writers I have examined in the course of this thesis. Much of this defilement found its way into Kubrick’s 1971 adaptation of the novel, which at least partially explains why there was such a large degree of public hostility to its cinematic release, and also why Kubrick himself requested that it should not be screened in Britain.

In the early 1970s violence in films was a volatile topic as a result of the output of a handful of directors, chief among them Sam Peckinpah whose *The Wild Bunch* (1969) and *Straw Dogs* (1971) in particular thrust artfully choreographed cinematic violence into audience’s faces. However, not since Hitchcock had a director provided cinemagoers with violent scenes which were so beautifully filmed, so magnificently choreographed, and so imbued with moral significance. Kubrick belongs within the same group. As Tony Parsons stated, ‘*A Clockwork Orange* put forward a strong case for the symphonic beauty of violence, the glamour of evil.’<sup>209</sup>

Yet in spite of the brouhaha caused by the filmic adaptation, Kubrick considerably downplayed the violence as it is depicted in Burgess’ novel: for example, the age of Billyboy and his “droogs” rape victim in the novella is, ‘not more than ten’<sup>210</sup>, but in the film she is at the very least in her late teens, more likely in her early twenties; the two (sober) girls in the film whom Alex (played by Malcolm McDowell) takes back to his bedroom and has sex with

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<sup>208</sup> Lewis, Roger, *Anthony Burgess*

Faber & Faber, London, 2003 (2002) p.230

<sup>209</sup> Parsons, Tony, ‘Alex Through the Looking Glass’ in *Empire* (December 1993) quoted in Tony Parsons’ *Dispatches from the Front Line of Popular Culture* Virgin, London, 1995 (1994) p.310

<sup>210</sup> Burgess, Anthony, *A Clockwork Orange*

Penguin, London, 2000 (1962) p.13

are likewise either adolescents or in their early twenties, while in the novella, ‘these two ptitsas couldn’t have been more than ten...’<sup>211</sup> and ‘...had to submit to the strange and weird desires of Alexander the Large which, what with the Ninth and the hypo jab, were choodessny and zammechat and very demanding, O my brothers. But they were both very very drunken and could hardly feel very much’<sup>212</sup>; rather than consensual sex he instead plies them with liquor and rapes them. While rape is of course immoral regardless of the age of the victim, the younger the victim the more despicable the act necessarily is.

What is immediately obvious here, other than the violence, is the language which is used. Anthony Burgess effectively created an entirely new language for his novella, which he called “nadsat”: the word is a transliteration of the Russian suffix for ‘teen.’ Much of it is based upon Russian words: for example “droogs” is derived from *drug*i, ‘friends in violence.’ Nadsat is used extensively by the narrator, Alex de Large, his three droogs, and members of the youth gangs they come into contact with. Thus it is used as a form of youth slang, virtually indecipherable to adults. Stanley Kubrick in his adaptation retained the use of nadsat, both in Alex’s voice-overs and in conversations between various characters, although obviously it is not heard as frequently as it does in the novella, which is narrated entirely by Alex.

It seems appropriate to discuss the relevance of the title *A Clockwork Orange*, for it is peculiarly relevant to the narrative’s thematic – especially ethical – preoccupations. It is derived from a Cockney East End slang phrase, ‘As queer as a clockwork orange,’ which means that someone is either crazy or a homosexual. Alex is crazy because he rapes and murders innocent people; the State is crazy for playing God by attempting to alter human beings irrevocably. This latter reason leads on to a much more significant meaning of the title. By utilising the Ludovico Treatment, the experimental course of “film therapy” which is meant to treat and cure habitual criminals, the State attempts to make natural beings into unnatural mechanical objects, like making an orange into a clockwork toy.

Additionally the title serves as a meta-fictional device in the novella, for it is also the name of the book being written by F. Alexander, the political “agitator” whose home Alex and his droogs break into, severely injuring him and killing his wife. There exists a

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<sup>211</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* p.33

<sup>212</sup> *ibid.* p.36

connection here between Alex, the protagonist, and F. Alexander: the former narrates *A Clockwork Orange*, while the latter is writing his own book with the same name. Both characters are enemies of the state. F. Alexander later takes Alex into his home, originally for political reasons but later in order to torture him by playing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The book is first referred to thus:

'It's a book,' I said. 'It's a book what you are writing.' I made the old goloss very coarse. 'I have always had the strongest admiration for them as can write books.' Then I looked at its top sheet, and there was the name – A CLOCKWORK ORANGE – and I said: 'That's a fair gloopy title. Who ever heard of a clockwork orange?' <sup>213</sup>

Stuart Y. McDougal proposes an interesting additional origin of the title:

The use of "orange" in the title of Alexander's work is [an] example of a slang (from *orang*, Malay for "man") that Alex later appropriates for himself ("like old Bog Himself...turning and turning and turning a vonny grahzny orange in his gigantic rookers"...). <sup>214</sup>

In regard to the violence in the novella, Blake Morrison quotes Anthony Burgess:

'It was certainly no pleasure to me to describe acts of violence when writing the novel,' wrote Burgess in 1972, the year Stanley Kubrick's adaptation embroiled him in controversy over the film's, and book's, possible incitement to violence. Later, in his autobiography *You've Had Your Time*, less on the defensive, he put it more interestingly: 'I was sickened by my own excitement at setting it down.' <sup>215</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* p.18

<sup>214</sup> McDougal, Stuart Y. (ed.), *Stanley Kubrick's A Clockwork Orange*  
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003 p.18

<sup>215</sup> Morrison, Blake, 'Introduction' *A Clockwork Orange* p.ix

However, the crux of the issue is not the extent to which *A Clockwork Orange* – either the novella or the film – depicts violence: a significant amount certainly, but far less than today’s average blockbuster action films. Nor does it concern the nature of this violence – some of which is sexual, but not necessarily *obscenely* graphic by nature, even taking into account the rape scenes. Rather, the important question is whether or not this violence is morally redeemed by the actions and intentions of its protagonist, Alex. The opening paragraph of Pauline Kael’s 1972 review of the film provides an insight into the type of view held by many critics of *A Clockwork Orange* upon its release:

Literal-minded in its sex and brutality, Teutonic in its humor, Stanley Kubrick’s *A Clockwork Orange* might be the work of a strict and exacting German professor who set out to make a porno-violent sci-fi comedy. Is there anything sadder – and ultimately more repellant – than a clean minded pornographer? The numerous rapes and beatings have no ferocity and no sensuality; they’re frigidly, pedantically calculated, and because there is no motivating emotion, the viewer may experience them as an indignity and wish to leave.<sup>216</sup>

Yet even four decades after its initial release, the film still possessed the power to shock critics, as this 1993 review by Tony Parsons illustrates:

‘There are countless films more violent than *A Clockwork Orange*. But there is not one that even comes *close* to matching its inflammatory power.

There’s a chilling conviction about the sex and violence in *A Clockwork Orange*.’<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Kael, Pauline, ‘*A Clockwork Orange*: Stanley Strangelove’ in *The New Yorker*, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1972 quoted in Stuart Y. McDougal (ed.), *Stanley Kubrick’s A Clockwork Orange* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003 p.134

<sup>217</sup> Parsons, Tony, ‘Alex Through the Looking Glass’ in *Empire* (December 1993) quoted in Tony Parsons’ *Dispatches from the Front Line of Popular Culture* Virgin, London, 1995 (1994) p.310

Even more recently Linda Ruth Williams provided the following analysis in *Sight & Sound*:

Kubrickian sex is directed as if it is case history, characterised by distance and analysis rather than proximity and heat. It is more pathologised than enjoyed. He has often been criticised for his coldness; the flip side of this is a sparkling, chilly lustre. Sexual scenarios laid out with this meticulous deliberation could be highly charged, like fetish objects held in check for careful observation. But they aren't. *A Clockwork Orange* is chock-full of erotic pictures, phallic objects and actual sex acts, but they are the scenery that surrounds its primary focus on social and psychic malaise, symptoms contributing to a diagnosis.<sup>218</sup>

The complexity and intricacy of the allusions contained within the novel and film's title in effect acts as a system of allusions to the complexity of the morality contained within the narrative. *A Clockwork Orange* depicts a world in which almost nobody is "good" (*almost* nobody, for there still must remain some innocent victims), a world in which those who wield power (the government that utilises the Ludovico Treatment), and those who oppose the government (F. Alexander and his clique) are no more instilled with moral goodness than the thugs like Alex and his droogs whom these parties use for their own political ends. As Blake Morrison explains in his Introduction to the novel:

[Alex]...becomes a pawn in a political struggle between government and opposition: the Augustinians in power, who use him as a guinea pig for their experiment in human conditioning; and the seemingly liberal but no less ruthless Pelagians, who want to parade him as a victim of government tyranny. (The distinction here was one Burgess often made himself: St Augustine thought that man is born in original sin, the monk Pelagius denied the doctrine.)<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Williams, Linda Ruth, 'Mister Strangelove' in *Sight & Sound* Vol. 19 Issue 3 March 2009 pp.21-2

<sup>219</sup> Morrison, Blake, 'Introduction' *A Clockwork Orange* p.xii

This conflict at the heart of the narrative is used to illustrate the conflict which he was embroiled in regarding the acceptance and rejection of his novel, based upon the morality of the tale:

In the preface he wrote to [the] 1988 edition, 'A Clockwork Orange Resucked', Burgess portrays himself as an Alex-like pawn, caught up in a political struggle that went way beyond commercial publishing: 'My book was Kennedyan and accepted the notion of moral progress. What was really wanted was a Nixonian book with no shred of optimism in it.' <sup>220</sup>

It was a rare occurrence when, in the late twentieth century, the morality of a fictional story was the subject of heated public debate. The same can be said of the reaction in regards to Kubrick's filmic adaptation. Although both Burgess' novel and Kubrick's film garnered significant commentary from critics, most would agree that Kubrick's adaptation was indeed "Nixonian", from the sinister opening tableau in the Korova Milkbar, where Alex and his droogs are drinking drugged milk in readiness for an evening's violence, to Alex's cynical final line of the film: 'I was cured all right.'

An interesting comment by George Bluestone regarding a difference between the novel (1848) and the film (William Wyler, 1939) of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, may illustrate a point which is relevant to *A Clockwork Orange*:

Within the general atmosphere of violence...Heathcliff is specifically responsible for shoving a tureen of hot apple sauce in Edgar's face; threatening to crush Edgar's ribs "like a rotten hazel-nut"; hanging Isabella's dog, Fanny; throwing a kitchen knife at Isabella; dashing his head against the knotted trunk of a tree; pummeling young Cathy with his hands. In addition, he is forever threatening violence...It is granted that many of these details would seem absurd on the screen. Raw brutality, literally transposed, loses the cushioning effect of language. <sup>221</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Morrison, 'Introduction' *A Clockwork Orange* p.xvii

<sup>221</sup> Bluestone, George, *Novels into Film*

Anthony Burgess' novella contains a great deal a violence, some of which finds its way into Stanley Kubrick's adaptation. The adaptation is, of course, renowned for its violence. However, by no means has Kubrick "literally transposed" this violence. The most famous example is the fight in the derelict casino between Alex and Billyboy's "droogs": it is clearly and obviously directed in a balletic, operatic, highly stylised manner. Another example is when the group of tramps beat up Alex as he is wandering the streets, after being rejected by his parents following the termination of his Ludovico Treatment. We do not so much see Alex being kicked and punched as we see close ups of the tramp's leering, ugly faces and Alex's pain-stricken countenance. It may seem that, indeed, Kubrick has opted for "the cushioning effect of language" by including Burgess' "nadsat" in his adaptation, but when violence without language is depicted on screen Kubrick's choices in regard to directing violent scenes is made clear.

Another important passage in Bluestone's book discusses:

...dreams and memories, which exist nowhere but in the individual consciousness, cannot be adequately represented in spatial terms...that is why pictorial representations of dreams or memory on the screen are almost always disappointing.<sup>222</sup>

How then does Kubrick pictorially represent Alex's dreams and memories (and fantasies) in his adaptation of *A Clockwork Orange*? He follows Alex's line of reasoning that 'A dream or nightmare is really only like a film inside your gulliver, except that it is as though you could walk into it and be part of it. And this is what happened to me.'<sup>223</sup>

As Mario Falsetto explains:

...Alex's poetic commentary is accompanied by "lovely pictures" (mental images) inspired by movies. Alex is seen in four shots as a vampire, fangs exposed, with fake blood dripping from the sides of his mouth. These shots alternate with shots of a hanging, explosions, and a phony avalanche from a trashy movie of the prehistoric

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<sup>222</sup> Bluestone, *Novels into Film* pp.47-8

<sup>223</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* p.83



genre. The rhythmical editing is carefully timed to the music and the B-movie fakery.  
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This comment brings up an important aspect of Kubrick's adaptation: its cinematic referentiality. While Burgess' novella often refers to literature (among other streets, there is featured a Kingsley [Amis] Avenue and a [J.B.] Priestly Place), Kubrick's film does the same with cinema, although without mentioning specific films or directors. Alex's fantasies, such as the ones mentioned above, are composed from overtly cinematic-looking stock footage, showing the extent to which Alex is divorced from reality: in his mind life is played out like in a film. Thus, it requires films (documentary footage, but nevertheless films) of Nazi parades, rapes and beatings, in order to cure him of his sickness. This aspect of the film is further discussed by Falsetto, such as in the following passage:

Alex sees his acts of violence as his "creative act." He has removed himself from the reality of his actions so completely that violence is now a piece of theatre, a performance. Alex's life has become a movie or play, and he is the star performer. There is little difference between Alex's fantasy life and his day-to-day reality. His drug-induced reality is mediated and filtered to the point that his violent actions become theatricalized and aestheticized. This aestheticization carries over into his imaginative life to the point where a simple act of masturbation becomes a poeticized series of trashy movie images ("it was gorgeousness and gorgeosity made flesh. It was like a bird of rarest spun heaven metal").<sup>225</sup>

This is not an unusual situation for a Kubrick protagonist to be in. Numerous critics have spoken of the process of "dehumanisation" as being an important thematic strand throughout much of Kubrick's *oeuvre*. Alex is dehumanised through the allure of, his attraction to, the illicit physical thrill and material gain of criminal acts, just as Humbert Humbert in *Lolita* is dehumanised by his need to murder the man (Clare Quilty) who "stole" his obsession, Lolita, from him, or Jack Torrance's dehumanisation in *The Shining* which results from both the

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<sup>224</sup> Falsetto, Mario, *Stanley Kubrick: A Narrative and Stylistic Analysis*

Praeger, Westport (CN), 2001 pp.56-7

<sup>225</sup> *ibid.* p.121

ghosts residing in the Overlook Hotel and the ghostly memories residing inside his own head. Interestingly, all three of these protagonists are rewarded with their own peculiar forms of inner torment.

According to Alexander Walker et al.,

*A Clockwork Orange* never sets out to explore the moral issue of violence; this has been a misleading belief that has often caused the film to be branded as “conscienceless” by critics who fail to see where Kubrick’s first priority lies, namely, with the moral issue of eradicating free will.<sup>226</sup>

Conversely, Tony Parsons has stated that,

What made *A Clockwork Orange* subversive was that it seems to rejoice in its dirty deeds. This is a film completely lacking in what screenwriting guru Robert McKee calls ‘the centre of goodness’. There is no moral redemption at the heart of *A Clockwork Orange*. The 15-year-old hero has the choice between good and evil. Emphatically, he chooses evil.<sup>227</sup>

Robert Phillip Kolker explains in his seminal text about the so-called “Movie Brat” generation of filmmakers, *A Cinema of Loneliness*,

Kubrick’s films are all to some extent concerned with failure of will, with a giving up of active participation in events and allowing those events to take control. *A Clockwork Orange* goes beyond this to indicate the threat of a direct manipulation of the will of one individual by others.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Walker, Alexander, Sybil Taylor & Ulrich Ruchti, *Stanley Kubrick, Director: A Visual Analysis* W. W. Norton, New York, 1999 (1971) p.200

<sup>227</sup> Parsons, *Dispatches* p.311

<sup>228</sup> Kolker, Robert Phillip, *A Cinema of Loneliness: Penn, Kubrick, Coppola, Scorsese, Altman* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1980 p.122

In the American edition of Burgess' novel the final, twenty-first chapter, in which Alex ponders the future of his hypothetical son, laments his past behaviour and begs forgiveness in an almost Catholic sense - such as Burgess was - was originally omitted, not to be restored until 1987, twenty-six years later. Blake Morrison notes that:

The lopping of this chapter from Kubrick's film, and from the US edition of the novel, infuriated Burgess for two reasons. First, there is the violation of the book's structural...unity...Burgess' second objection to the loss of the last chapter is that it destroys the book's moral integrity. He felt there was little point in writing a novel which didn't allow for moral growth, and found something glib, cynical and sensationalizing in the abridgment.<sup>229</sup>

Interestingly, however, Kubrick did not agree with Burgess' objections. In an interview given to Michel Ciment he said, 'This extra chapter depicts the rehabilitation of Alex. But it is, as far as I am concerned, unconvincing and inconsistent with the style and intent of the book...I certainly never gave any serious consideration to using it.'<sup>230</sup> However, like Stephen King's reaction to Kubrick's adaptation of his *The Shining*, Burgess' reaction to the adaptation of his novella has mellowed over time, to the extent that he was eventually to praise Kubrick's treatment of his work.

Yet I believe that Kubrick, in filming *A Clockwork Orange*, maintains the novel's moral integrity, albeit by transforming it along the way. In order to appreciate fully the sophisticated and complex morality which both the novella and the film present to their respective audiences, I believe it is first necessary to quote what is perhaps one of the most extraordinary and thought-provoking passages in the novella:

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<sup>229</sup> Morrison, Blake, 'Introduction' *A Clockwork Orange* Penguin, London, 2000 (1962) pp.xix-xx

<sup>230</sup> Ciment, Michel (trans. Gilbert Adair), *Kubrick* Collins, London, 1983 (1980) p.157

There was music playing, a very nice malenky string quartet, my brothers, by Claudius Birdman, one that I knew well. I had to have a smeck, though, thinking of what I'd viddied once in one of these like articles on Modern Youth, about how Modern Youth would be better off if A Lively Appreciation Of The Arts could be like encouraged. Great Music, it said, and Great Poetry would like quieten Modern Youth down and make Modern Youth more Civilized. Civilized my syphilised yarbles.<sup>231</sup>

Burgess implicitly agrees with his narrator on this account (after all, it is Beethoven, and specifically his Ninth Symphony, that Alex turns to in order to prepare himself for some “ultra-violence” and “a bit of the old in-out in-out”) and Kubrick stays true to this thematic thread, an important facet of the film that was picked up on by a small number of the film's more sensitive critics, Robert Hughes being among them:

...the popular 19<sup>th</sup>-century idea, still held today, (is) that Art is Good for You, that the purpose of the fine arts is to provide moral uplift. Kubrick's message, amplified from Burgess' novel, is the opposite: art has no ethical purpose. There is no religion of beauty. Art serves, instead, to promote ecstatic consciousness. The kind of ecstasy depends on the person who is having it.<sup>232</sup>

While Alex is in the prison hospital receiving the Ludovico Treatment this idea that art is in fact not morally uplifting – or at least not for Alex – is coupled with the idea that neither is religion.

While the stereo played bits of lovely Bach I closed my glazzies and viddied myself helping in and even taking charge of the tolchocking and the nailing, being dressed in a like toga that was the heighth of Roman fashion.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* p.32

<sup>232</sup> Hughes, Robert, 'The Décor of Tomorrow's Hell' in *Time* December 27<sup>th</sup> 1971 p.59  
quoted in Alexander Walker et al. *Stanley Kubrick, Director: A Visual Analysis* W. W.  
Norton, New York, 1999 (1971) p.208

<sup>233</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* p.60



Fig. 5.1 *A Clockwork Orange* (Stanley Kubrick, 1971) Alex de Large (Malcolm McDowell) receiving the Ludovico Treatment.

Instead of the Bible providing Alex with spiritual solace (as the Prison Chaplain thinks, when he congratulates Alex on his devotion towards reading “The Good Book”) Alex instead imagines himself as one of the Roman soldiers in charge of crucifying Jesus. The music of Bach aids this fantasy, just as the music of Beethoven previously readied Alex for his nights of debauchery and criminal activity (this may be compared with the Kommandants in the Nazi concentration camps, who played beautiful music by the great German composers while leading innocent people to their horrible deaths). Alex states in both the novella and the film that he prefers the Old Testament, with its bloodshed and sexual congress and maleficent God, to the “preachy” God of the New Testament who is more interested in love than punishment.

Clearly the “presentation” of morality in both the novella and the film is no straightforward, black-and-white task, a position confirmed by Kubrick in a *New York Times* interview: ‘Part of the artistic challenge is to present the violence as he [Alex] sees it, not with the disapproving eye of the moralist but subjectively as Alex experiences it.’<sup>234</sup> It is for this reason that the film has been criticised, even condemned, by both sides of the political spectrum: leftists have objected to its presentation of a bleak, dystopian Socialist society which cannot help but turn potentially good young men into mindless thugs and killers, while right-wing conservatives have condemned it on the grounds that it condones and glorifies violence. The former are incorrect in that the society presented in the novella and film could just as easily be Fascist as Socialist; the latter misguided in that, while the State is clearly wrong in the methods they use to attempt to prevent future criminal acts, this does not mean that Alex and his droogs’ behaviour is in any way presented as being admirable or unavoidable.

David Thomson has commented on the film, and more particularly on its director:

With *A Clockwork Orange* (if not before), a problem came to the surface with Stanley Kubrick, a matter very like one’s response to Billy Wilder: If the artist doesn’t like people or humankind, then how long can it be before his films take on a sardonic

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<sup>234</sup> McGregor, Craig, ‘Nice Boy from the Bronx?’ in the *New York Times* January 30, 1972 sect. 2, p.13 quoted in McDougal (ed.) *Stanley Kubrick’s A Clockwork Orange* p.14

mannerism where cruelty is hard to tell from style? It seems to me part of Kubrick's analytical eye for intelligence that he tends to see people in terms of the mistakes they make. This is lucid sometimes, but so cold.<sup>235</sup>

Kubrick's adaptation of *A Clockwork Orange* may indeed be cold (or at least seem that way to viewers who are not sufficiently appreciative of Kubrick's dark, broodingly ironic sense of humour), but then Burgess' novella is similarly sterile at times. Kubrick managed to capture effectively the mood and feel of the source text: both its serious moral message and its dark, satirical humour. He presented its often impenetrably abstruse invented language, nadsat. He presented its elaborate costumes, and its threatening, imposing décor and architecture. One may certainly be critical of Kubrick's film in and of itself, but I believe it to be an unfair charge to dismiss it as being wildly unfaithful to its precursor text.

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<sup>235</sup> Thomson, David, *"Have You Seen...?": A Personal Introduction to 1,000 Films*  
Penguin, London, 2008 p.175

## **Chapter Seven: *The Fixer*.**

Most of the novels I have examined during the writing of this thesis have had some basis in actual events: *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* is principal among these, while *A Clockwork Orange*, *Lolita* and *The Shining* considerably less so. However, *The Fixer* is the only novel to possess a significant amount of historical truth. The novel is based upon the Mendel Beilis case (Yakov Bok – Bok means “goat” - represents Beilis in the novel) which occurred in the Ukraine early in the twentieth century. At the time Ukraine was a part of imperial Russia. An anti-Semitic organisation known as, ‘the Black Hundred...in an attempt to start a pogrom, helped to fabricate the charge of ritual murder against the manifestly innocent Beilis when a boy was found horribly murdered...’<sup>236</sup>. Therein lies the stuff of which good fiction is made: evil villains, the gruesome murder of a young innocent, an equally innocent protagonist to root for and even an - albeit brief – ill-fated love interest in the form of Zinaida Nikolaevna, the gentile daughter of Bok’s drunken employer and Black Hundreds member Nikolai Maximovitch Lebedev. In saying this however, *The Fixer* is by no means a “run of the mill” murder mystery. Not only is it based upon an actual historical incident, but for a considerable amount of the story (and, relatively speaking, an even longer part of the film) the protagonist is incarcerated in a dank, squalid prison cell.

The film adaptation of *The Fixer* (John Frankenheimer, 1968) starts at the beginning of the novel’s narrative: the camera tracks along a workbench containing Yakov Bok’s (Alan Bates’) tools and stops on Bok repairing a cut-throat razor. Bok then proceeds to cut off his peots or side-curls with a pair of scissors and shave off his beard with the razor he has recently repaired. This symbolic removal of Bok’s Jewish identity is important in regards to the narrative, for he considers himself a “freethinker”. He affiliates himself with no political organisation (‘ ‘I’ve never belonged to a political party or any secret organizations... To tell the truth I don’t know one from the other. If I were a better educated man I might...’ ’<sup>237</sup>) or

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<sup>236</sup> Tanner, Tony, *City of Words: American Fiction 1950-70*

Jonathan Cape, London, 1971 p.334

<sup>237</sup> Malamud, Bernard, *The Fixer*

Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1982 (1966) p.90



religious organisation (‘ ‘...if I’m anything at all it’s a freethinker. I say this to let you know I’m not a religious man.’’ <sup>238</sup>). His only affiliation is to the philosophy of the seventeenth-century thinker Baruch Spinoza (‘If there was a God, after reading Spinoza he has closed up his shop and become an idea.’ <sup>239</sup>).

Baruch (or Benedict de) Spinoza (1632-77) was a Dutch rationalist philosopher of Portuguese-Jewish origin who essentially laid the groundwork for both the Enlightenment and modern biblical criticism. In 1656 Spinoza was issued a writ of *cherem* (Hebrew for “excommunication”) from the Jewish community in Amsterdam as he opposed a number of normative facets of Jewish belief, particularly in the way he interpreted the Talmud and conceived of God (‘they don’t exactly love him in the synagogue, if you’ve read the story of his life.’ <sup>240</sup>) However, this did not seem to significantly alter his thought: in his *Theological-Political Treatise* (1670) he contends that the Jewish people are chosen only in respect to their social organisation and political good fortune – otherwise they are not unique amongst ethnic groups.

Yakov Bok would presumably disagree with Spinoza’s ideas concerning the State, for he contended that sovereignty does not infringe upon our autonomy as we are freely following an authority whom we have chosen and who has our rational self-interest at heart. However, in saying this, Spinoza also admitted that monarchies are the least stable form of government and the most likely to degenerate into tyranny. This thematic strand is introduced into the novel in Chapter One of Part Three, when Yakov Bok first meets B. A. Bibikov, the Investigating Magistrate for Cases of Extraordinary Importance. Bibikov questions Bok regarding his thoughts about the philosophy of Spinoza (followed by briefly mentioning both Hegel and Marx), and additionally provides his own thoughts such as the following:

Spinoza conceded a certain freedom of political choice, similar to the freedom of electing to think, if it were possible to make these choices. At least it is possible to think them. He perhaps felt that the purpose of the state – the government – was the security and comparative freedom of rational man. This was to permit man to think as best he could. <sup>241</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Malamud, *The Fixer* p.91

<sup>239</sup> *ibid.* p.58

<sup>240</sup> *ibid.* p.70

<sup>241</sup> *ibid.* pp.72-3



Fig. 6.1 *The Fixer* (John Frankenheimer, 1968) The original film poster.

I mention this, not only because Spinoza's name continually makes an appearance throughout the novel, but primarily because at the novel's heart are ethical issues pertaining to the intersection of faith and the state, and God in regard to both the individual and mankind as a whole. As Yakov Bok's situation grows increasingly intolerable, his thought process increasingly concerns itself with the possibility of God. However, concurrently he questions why, if God is omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent, he is also apparently so impotent in the face of such monumental human suffering, despair and injustice. According to L. Lamar Nisly:

[The]... "God-haunted" quality of Malamud's characters, with its implications of moral actions, seems central for an understanding of religious mystery in his writing. As Daniel Walden suggests, "For Malamud what is supremely important is man's relationship to the Law, meaning doing what is right when it has to be done, no matter the suffering".<sup>242</sup>

This short passage succinctly addresses some the most important thematic issues present in the novel: God (both His relationship with the Jewish people and with Yakov Bok specifically), moral actions (particularly regarding whether or not Bok should in effect be a scapegoat, or schlemiel, for his people) and the Law: both the Jewish Law as expressed in the Torah and Talmud, and the Russian Law which Bok must fight against in order to be free. 'The schlemiel, as defined by Ruth Wisse in 'The Schlemiel as a Modern Hero', is a character who stands for a whole race of people.'<sup>243</sup> In effect, the question of freedom – and the moral responsibility which is an inherent aspect of it – occupies a central part of the novel, and is even perhaps the foremost thematic strand within the narrative: what is freedom, and what must mankind, and more particularly individual men, do in order to be free? An

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<sup>242</sup> Walden, Daniel, 'Malamud and His Universal Heroes' *Studies in American Jewish Literature* 7 (1988) p.156 quoted in L. Lamar Nisly's *Impossible to Say: Representing Religious Mystery in Fiction by Malamud, Percy, Ozick, and O'Connor* Greenwood Press, Westport (CN), 2002 p.41

<sup>243</sup> <http://www.123HelpMe.com> (10/02/2009)

example of this aspect of the novel is briefly explicated in Bok's reply to Bibikov's question in Chapter One of Part Three:

'If a man is bound to Necessity where does freedom come from?'

'That's in your thought, your honour, if your thought is in God.'<sup>244</sup>

However, when Bok is alone in his dark, depressing prison cell his thoughts concerning his Jewish identity, God and the historical circumstances he finds himself involved in are far more pessimistic, as the following passage illustrates:

He [Bok] sometimes thought God was punishing him for his unbelief. He was, after all, the jealous God. 'Thou shalt worship no other Gods before me,' not even no Gods. He also blamed the goyim for their eternal hatred of Jews. Things go badly at a historical moment and go that way, God or no God, forever. Did it *have* to be so? And he continued to curse himself. It could have happened to a more dedicated Jew, but it had happened instead to a recent freethinker because he was Yakov Bok.<sup>245</sup>

This thematic function of the narrative is further reinforced on the following page:

Being born a Jew meant being vulnerable to history, including its worst errors. Accident and history had involved Yakov Bok as he had never dreamed he could be involved. The involvement was, in a way of speaking, impersonal, but the effect, his misery and suffering, were not. The suffering was personal, painful, and possibly endless.

He felt entrapped, abandoned, helpless. He had disappeared from the world and nobody he could call friend knew it. Nobody.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Malamud, *The Fixer* p.72

<sup>245</sup> *ibid.* p.140

<sup>246</sup> *ibid.* p.141

Just as in the film, the novel early on indicates that Yakov Bok has rejected his religion and the God which it worships. An example of this is the following dialogue which occurs between Bok and his stepfather Shmuel before Bok departs from his shtetl for Kiev:

‘What’s in the world,’ Shmuel said, ‘is in the shtetl – people, their trials, worries, circumstances. But here at least God is with us.’

‘He’s with us till the Cossacks come galloping, then he’s elsewhere. He’s in the outhouse, that’s where he is.’<sup>247</sup>

Needless to say, this is an extremely pessimistic view of God, a view which is not improved by Bok’s arrest, imprisonment, and the subsequent abuse and ill-treatment which he suffers. He is at the mercy of God and men, but over the course of the narrative he learns that freedom may nevertheless be achieved because it arises from the individual and his ethics. The following internal monologue on the part of Bok as he travels by carriage to the courthouse on the novel’s penultimate page fundamentally expresses the realisation he has achieved about his own predicament and the predicament of mankind in general:

One thing I’ve learned, he [Bok] thought, there’s no such thing as an unpolitical man, especially a Jew. You can’t be one without the other, that’s clear enough. You can’t sit still and see yourself destroyed.

Afterwards he thought, Where there’s no fight for it there’s no freedom. What is it Spinoza says? If the state acts in ways that are abhorrent to human nature it’s the lesser evil to destroy it. Death to the anti-Semites! Long live revolution! Long live liberty!<sup>248</sup>

These two paragraphs depict a radical transformation undertaken by the character of Bok through his suffering. He has gone from being a naïve, apolitical country bumpkin to a man who is all too aware of his place in history, in politics, and in the eyes of his people. He has in

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<sup>247</sup> Malamud, *The Fixer* p.14

<sup>248</sup> *ibid.* p.299

effect finally lived up to the knowledge which he succinctly expressed to his former wife Raisl before their wedding: 'If you want to be free, first be free in your mind.'<sup>249</sup>

For the vast majority of both the novel and the film, however, this is certainly not the case for Yakov Bok. He is both literally a prisoner in a cell, as well as being a prisoner of his own pessimistic and fatalistic view of human affairs and God's part in them. 'Vey iz mir ['Woe is me'], he thought uneasily, something bad has happened.'<sup>250</sup> is the second sentence of the novel, and it adequately expresses Yakov's view of his own life, and of the Jews living in the Pale of Settlement, which was the:

Restricted area of Jewish settlement in Czarist Russia stretching in a wide belt from the Baltic to the Black Sea. When the Russian Empire absorbed parts of Poland in 1791, it brought in a large Jewish population. These Jews were segregated in the Pale of Settlement.<sup>251</sup>

As Yakov tells his father-in-law Shmuel in the first chapter of the novel: 'The shtetl is a prison, no change from the days of Khmel'nitsky. It moulders and the Jews moulder in it.'<sup>252</sup> Bohdan Zynovii Mykhailovych Khmel'nitsky (in Polish Bohdan Zenobi Chmielnicki) was the ruthless leader of the Cossacks who waged a war of "liberation" in the Ukraine against Polish control between 1648 and 1654, essentially obliterating any Jewish and Roman Catholic influence and causing an immense number of deaths and amount of damage.

On an individual note, the following exchange occurs on the next page:

'Plans or none you're looking for trouble.'

'I've never had to look,' said the fixer.'<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Malamud, *The Fixer* p.191

<sup>250</sup> *ibid.* p.7

<sup>251</sup> Unterman, Alan, *Dictionary of Jewish Lore and Legend*

Thames and Hudson, London, 1997 (1991) p.152

<sup>252</sup> Malamud, *The Fixer* p.14

<sup>253</sup> *ibid.* p.15

Even before he is wrongly arrested for murder, Yakov Bok is continually persecuted by his own sense of personal calamity. While working in Nikolai Maximovitch Lebedev's brickyard the following passage occurs:

In the dark he feared calamities he only occasionally thought of during the day – the stable in flames, burning down with him in it, bound hand and foot unable to move; and the maddened horses destroying themselves. Or dying of consumption, or syphilis, coughing up or pissing blood. And he dreaded what worried him most – to be unmasked as a hidden Jew. 'Gevalt!' he shouted, then listened in fright for sounds in the stable to tell him whether the drivers were there and had heard him cry out.<sup>254</sup>

Gevalt is a Yiddish word which is used to express intense surprise, shock, dismay, etc. However, as the narrative progresses Yakov is less prone to experiencing any form of surprise or shock regarding his situation and instead resigns himself to his daily abjections and humiliations, such as being stripped six times a day and searched.

I mentioned earlier that Yakov Bok effectively acts as a schlemiel, or scapegoat on behalf of his people, in both the novel and film. This aspect of the narrative is continually reinforced, especially by Bok himself. For example, just before Bok receives his Court Indictment the following passage explains his position:

To the goyim what one Jew is is what they all are. If the fixer stands accused of murdering one of their children, so does the rest of the tribe. Since the crucifixion the crime of the Christ-killer is the crime of all Jews. 'His blood be on us and our children.'

He pities their fate in history.<sup>255</sup>

As one may expect of a narrative which concerns the unlawful imprisonment of a Jewish man on charges relating to a blood libel, history is a thematic concern which arises frequently. B. A. Bibikov, the Investigating Magistrate for Cases of Extraordinary Importance who aids Bok until he is found by Bok himself hanged in a prison cell, says to the Prosecuting Attorney Grubeshov, 'History is not law.', to which Grubeshov responds, 'We

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<sup>254</sup> Malamud, *The Fixer* p.60

<sup>255</sup> *ibid.* pp.245-6

will see about that.’<sup>256</sup> To some extent this alludes to the infamous Dreyfus affair, in which the French army officer Alfred Dreyfus was falsely convicted of and imprisoned for treason in 1894. The Mendel Beilis case, which *The Fixer*, is strongly based upon, is essentially a repetition of the same absurd anti-Semitism present in the upper echelons of European political administration which defined the Dreyfus affair.

Bibikov says to Bok:

‘The French have a saying, “The more it changes, the more it remains the same.” You must admit there may be a certain truth to that, especially with reference to what we call “society”. In effect has not changed in its essentials from what it was in the dim past, even though we tend loosely to think of civilization as progress. I frankly no longer believe in that concept. I respect man for what he has to go through in life, and sometimes for how he does it, but he has changed little since he began to pretend he was civilized, and the same thing may be said about our society...’<sup>257</sup>

This is a remarkably important passage in the novel, coming as it does from a high-ranking public official involved in the case. “There is something rotten in the state of Russia,” and the rot is rampant anti-Semitism, espoused from the lowliest peasant to the most influential public figures – including Tsar Nicholas the Second. ‘What was being a Jew but an everlasting curse? He [Bok] was sick of their history, destiny, blood guilt.’<sup>258</sup> This comment is warranted, especially in light of what Yakov must suffer: both physical and mental torment, and preposterous accusations such as the following by Grubeshov:

‘No Jew is innocent, least of all a ritual assassin. Furthermore, it is known you are an agent of the Jewish Kahal, the secret Jewish international government which is engaged in a subterranean conspiracy with the World Zionist Organization, the Alliance of Herzl, and the Russian Freemasons. We also have reason to believe that your masters are dickering with the British to help you overthrow the legitimate Russian government and make yourselves rulers of our land and people. We are not exactly naïve. We know

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<sup>256</sup> Malamud, *The Fixer* p.117

<sup>257</sup> *ibid.* p.157

<sup>258</sup> *ibid.* p.206



your purposes. We have read the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion”, and the “Communist Manifesto”, and fully understand your revolutionary intentions!’<sup>259</sup>

The initial statement, ‘No Jew is innocent,’ in essence defines the official position of the Russian authorities present in *The Fixer*. In the view of the Russian law of the time, Yakov Bok is manifestly guilty immediately upon arrest, simply for the “crime” of being a Jew to begin with. The fact that he was found in the Lukianovsky District, an area of Kiev restricted to only gentiles and high-ranking Jews, and bloody rags were found in his apartment remaining from when he assisted an elderly Jewish gentleman in trouble, does not help his cause. Yakov spends his prison time awaiting the arrival of his official indictment, which does not arrive until near the end of the narrative, and it is in part because of this seemingly eternal period of waiting for something which he does not even know will arrive which causes him to experience temporary insanity:

...at night he had terrible dreams, visions of mass slaughter that left him sleepless, moaning. When he dozed again people were being cut down by Cossacks with sabres. Yakov was shot running into the woods. Yakov, hiding under a table in his hut, was dragged forth and beheaded. Yakov, fleeing along a rutted road, had lost an arm, an eye, his bloody balls; Raisl, lying on the sanded floor, had been raped beyond caring, her fruitless guts were eviscerated. Shmuel’s split and broken body hung from a window.<sup>260</sup>

*The Fixer* is a fascinating tragedy, for it is both the tragedy of a single man and the tragedy of an entire people. Yakov Bok, in the role of a schlemiel, is condemned to suffer the most abjectly humiliating torments, yet he survives. However, not without a cost: ‘Something in myself has changed. I’m not the same man I was. I fear less and hate more.’, he says late in both the novel and the filmic adaptation. The film adaptation charts this change in the protagonist faithfully; of all of the adaptations which I have studied in this thesis, it is probably the one which most unerringly follows the plot of its precursor text. In the case of *The Fixer* this is certainly not a bad thing, for Malamud’s novel possesses many appealing features. These include a hero who in spite of his heroism is very humanly portrayed, with all

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<sup>259</sup> Malamud, *The Fixer* p.204-5

<sup>260</sup> *ibid.* p.180

his faults and errors; it also includes a strong moral and ethical message. *The Fixer* is a successful and enjoyable adaptation in large part because it imparts this moral core of the novel through the terrible plight of its lead character. Most films which contain an obvious “good versus evil” dichotomy are ridiculous and two dimensional because of this: however, *The Fixer* is powerful and entertaining because of this very fact, and thus as both readers and viewers we are presented with the agonising plight of an entire people through one man, Yakov Bok.

**Chapter Eight: Novel Fragment (*Eleven A'Bier Place*).**

**MONDAY...**

“Sleeping is no mean art: it should be studied the livelong day.”,

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*

*Have ya ever lay awake at four in the mornin', unable to get to sleep? All ya wanna do is fall unconscious - ya body's exhausted, ya mind's screamin' out in desp'rate agony with the knowledge that in less than four hours ya gonna have ta get up & do the same inane, depressin' shit ya did yesterday & the day before that & the thousands of days made up of tens of thousands of hours before that - but the harder ya try to get to sleep the more awake ya are as ya lie in a pool of sweat: the result of ya own nervous f'ustrated energy while the ceiling stares down at ya, invisible but ever-present in the all consumin' darkness, tauntin' ya inability to do this most basic of human functions as ya dwell upon the nature of insomnia: that menacin' nocturnal presence...that phantasm that insists on keepin' ya black-ringed, heavy-lidded eyes open & screamin' the thoughts that race about ya brain &...*

...it's morning proper now: 7:23 on Adrian's bedside alarm clock. After pulling on the grey Twink-splotched school trousers from the heap of crumpled clothing piled on the floor at the end of his bed, he removes the night's residue from his eyes & walks lead-footed along the hallway, past the cheap glass-embalmed reproductions of Monet's lilies and Degas' dancers – so familiar as to be essentially unseen, as commonplace as the wallpaper pattern and light fittings – past the entrance into the living room from where emits the sound of his mother Linda commanding,

-We'll jist practice it once more,

to which his sister Samantha responds in an exasperated tone,

-But I've already done it three times...I'm sick'v'it,

before he moves out of hearing into the kitchen where he pours a coffee from the already boiled jug - puffs of steam emanate from its spout like wisps of smoke from a genie's lamp - drops two slices of bread into the toaster & stares somnolently at a photograph on the refrigerator door of himself, Samantha, Marshall, Mum & Dad standing beside a stone monument somewhere up north, he can't remember where: a relic of a forgotten, momentary point in time void of any emotional triggers. He tries to estimate how old he was when the photograph was taken - ten or eleven maybe, but just as easily thirteen for all he can remember - while intermittently sipping the hot black liquid from the mug he holds &...

...sitting in his office – or cubicle, rather - a wood & felt partition surrounding him on three sides: neck height to an average person and chest height to Mark. It's still early; the morning sun hasn't yet completed its ascent over the horizon but nevertheless throws what light it does possess through the window on the fourth side of the cubicle, across the *Herald* Mark's reading, highlighting an article ROAMING PACKS TERRORISE STH ORKLIND which perks his attention, provoking him to imagine *Mad Max*-esque nomadic warlords, until he discovers that it's about packs of wild dogs which - while far less exciting & a lot more mundane - regardless conjures up an appealing comic image. He releases a bout of hoarse laughter when he reads of a dozen or so rabid dogs that attacked a septuagenarian pensioner - or seventy year-old elderly beneficiary as Nathaniel Falanger, hack journalist, redundantly puts it - knocking her to the ground before pilfering her grocery bags of their contents & leaving her immobilised on the footpath. One of the station rookies - recently procured from a diminutive batch of new recruits, fresh out of training and ripe for the plucking - pokes his snout around the side of the cubicle to inquire,

-What's up?

Mark replies, -Wild fuckin' animals roamin' 'round South Orklind 'tacking old ladies... nothin' new,

& with a noise indicating acceptance of this fact but not understanding the rookie begins to leave but not before Mark tells him to, -Put the jug on won't ya &...

...-the stone...

...the future accumulates like a weight upon the past...

...the weight upon the earliest years is easier to remove to let that time spring up like grass that has been crushed...

...the years followin' childhood become welded to their future...massed like stone...& often the time beneath cannot spring back into growth like new grass...it lies bled of its green in a new shape with those frail bloodless sprouts of another unfamiliar time...entangled one with the other beneath the stone...

-It's still not good enough, says Linda.

-Why not? asks Samantha with equal parts frustration & disinterest.

-‘cause we got the North Island champs in a few weeks & it has to be perfec’ if we got any show.

-This is the fifth time I’ve done it this mornin’...I’m not doin’ it any fuckin’ more.

Linda, her patience threshold penetrated by this last remark replies,

-Don’t ya bloody well swear at me...now jist do it once more & then we’ll stop.

The look of defiance on Samantha’s face slowly, almost imperceptibly, changes to one of resigned acceptance before she continues:

-The Sunday slow train...a goods train with a passenger carriage at the end took seven hours to travel the seventy-eight miles between Oamaru & Dunedin &...

...Marshall groggily half-opens his eyes & closes them again before making a series of faltering attempts to reach for his phone: eventually he grasps it and pries his eyelids back open to see that it is 8:46, exactly 46 minutes after his first lecture started. With a sense of comfortable acquiescence to this unalterable situation he resumes some semblance of a sleeping position: he once more closes his eyes, only to suddenly jolt into full and adrenaline-fuelled consciousness at the horrifying recollection that there is a test immediately proceeding the lecture. Something about tax law, he seems to recollect. *Fuck I shouldn’t have smoked that weed las’ night* he thinks but the point is a null one as he almost certainly wouldn’t have remembered about the test anyway: he hasn’t opened his books in days, and furthermore hasn’t attended university for over a week. While preparing to raise his lethargic frame out of bed he instead leans over & kisses Abby - Abigail Imogen Jane McKinley as she is known to the government & its census & beneficiary offshoots - who unexpectedly responds to his action not just by movement of her lips but with a slow & somewhat languorous movement of her body accompanied by a slight murmur - the motion & noise of one recently awoken by the physical presence of another - the one having now inserted her tongue past the other’s lips who responds with increasingly fervent kissing followed by the quick swivel of his body to a position over Abby’s, his head not over hers but her chest instead so that when he pushes her

t-shirt - the resisting bleached-black faded item sliding over her breasts, the almost hemispherical, faintly dun-hued nipple crowned breasts he has looked upon so many times before this – he lowers his tongue on to her left nipple while moving his index finger back and forth over the other, prompting Abbey to reach inside Marshall’s boxer shorts & take hold of his cock which is enlarged but doesn’t become fully erect until after a significant degree of effort on Marshall’s part & facilitation on Abbey’s that makes up in effectiveness of technique for what it lacks in enthusiasm of execution. Abbey slides her body down beneath the sheets, sporadically distributing kisses & occasional dry licks to his face neck chest & abdomen puts his cock in her mouth &...

...two “Woman’s Specialised” multi-vitamin tablets, one supplementary multi-vitamin “Booster” tablet, two “Quik Pik-Up” naturopathic herbal energy pills, one 40mg Acupan, one 20mg Prozac: lined up along the benchtop like her own morning reception committee, the queen’s levee, washed down with a glass of orange juice before reaching for coffee – white, two sugars – the cup held carefully, cautiously poised, balanced in her hand so as not to spill any of its cloudy white content onto the similarly shaded carpet. She walks slowly out of the kitchen into the almost-adjoining living room, places the cup onto the unevenly distributed pile of newspaper: presumably the haphazard remnants of the previous evening’s news deposited there by Mark. She picks up the remote control from between two of the cushions on the three-seater sofa & flicks to Channel One in time to hear Mary Lambert announce that after the advertisement break a certain Dr. Rosemary Phillips will tell you how to lose weight, stay healthy & feel great through the power of positive thinking &...

...racing through the morning streets now - 75 in a 50k zone - the Levin winds in and out of traffic, adopting every possible opportunity to overtake vehicles or maneuver into dangerously narrow gaps amongst the denizens of Orklind’s mid-morning downtown traffic flow (or perhaps lack of it) yet this fails to prevent a young man - slightly dazed from the previous evening’s marijuana intoxication & absent of direct thought due to a blowjob that went on a bit longer than expected – from wedging his black car into ludicrously tight spaces between bumpers in an attempt to prevent missing a test, a test he can ill-afford to miss. Time: 9:02. ETA: 9:08. It will be hit-or-miss whether he’ll be allowed in, hence the reason why the driving antics of the Dukes of Hazzard are being displayed on cramped inner-city

streets by a sleep deprived male just out of his teens, his selected choice of hard house track played at a moderately loud volume so that it's unerringly consistent bass is just audible to the foot & vehicular traffic that surrounds him: the office and retail employees at the start of their working day, the mothers returning from taking their kids to school, perhaps anticipating a day of shopping with their husband's credit cards - groceries, a few magazines (Women's Day, Cleo or Cosmopolitan thrown into the trolley) then break for morning tea at a café (espresso and a bagel probably) before maybe splashing out on a new pair of shoes, or that lovely halter-neck top she spied in a shop window in Parnell last Thursday, or the new Julio Iglesias CD she'd been meaning to buy for weeks &...

...Samantha sits on the torn stained vinyl seats of the bus staring at the words FUCK YOU scrawled unevenly and obviously hastily with a black marker pen across the back of the seat in front of her. No, fuck *you*. No, fuck every single one of the dumb skanks filling up this rusting deathtrap with their cheap perfume & their easily excitable pubescent gestures & their noise: the depressing, deafening noise of raised, almost shouted, voices proclaiming where and with whom they made out/ had sex in the weekend - depending less upon their age than their level of sexual promiscuity, or rather willingness - how much they drank & whether or not they vomited; the movie, inevitably a romantic comedy starring two young attractive leads, they saw either at the cinema or on video & perhaps some brief disparaging mention of the boring, maybe even *so gay* family event (generally an aunt's birthday or grandparent's wedding anniversary or some such celebration) they were forced, against their will, to attend. It is this environment that proves peculiarly conducive to Samantha's poetic output, the angry little stanzas that

she composes while trapped amid this human sea of sounds and bodies, the bus like an opposite version of a sensory deprivation chamber, playing host to a ceaseless barrage of physical sensations: the high pitched whine of adolescent conversation, the cornucopic view in every direction of female faces, many a pale white topped with blonde but not all – a smattering of brunettes, one or two redheads, a few Asians, a few Maoris, a sole Indian who sits in the window seat beside Samantha, as far as she is aware no Polynesians, no Somalians, which is not surprising considering where this bus departs from - the slightly squishy feel of the seats, the cold steel of the handrail, the distinctive smell of a decades old bus crammed to



capacity with menstruating, estrogen charged, deodorant drenched teenagers. All of which provides immense and invaluable impetus to Samantha's versifications, tirades against the world & the inadequacies of her own mind – her fears & obsessions, self-doubts & self-humiliations – but never, ever, in the morning. She is still far too tired, too sleep-stunned for that. Poetry has to wait until at least eleven o'clock, generally until the long bus journey home after which she enters the delicious quietude of her bedroom, perhaps first securing a glass of Coke & a ham & cheese sandwich with which to both sharpen the intensity & quell the rough edges of her artistic vision. But for now she is intent on exiting the bus with the minimum of physical contact from her fellow passengers, all aiming at one of two exits, at breathable air & plenty of space & a slightly less infuriating level of noise, at the outside world, at freedom. Achieving this with a significant degree of effort & concentration she walks through the entrance into the school, past the sign that reads DATRON GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL which she reconstructs in her mind, not for the first time, to read DATRON SLUTS HIGH SCHOOL. Still has five letters & keeps the S at the end. It would be depressing if it wasn't so funny: the straight blonde hair, the white shirts worn as tightly as possible to accentuate breasts to their full underdeveloped extent, the incredibly short skirts displaying the maximum length of thigh, the knee-high socks; the uniform of these clones, these sexual automatons whose sole purpose is to attract boys, communicating to all who see them I GET LAID (or more often I WANT TO). This is not strange in itself, yet what is however is that every year that passes the girls who dress this way get younger - or at least it seems so to Samantha. Whereas it was once the domain of sixth & seventh formers to look skanky if they so chose, now fourth & fifth formers, even some third formers, dress this way. Samantha had worn a skirt that reached halfway down her shinbone until fifth form, until she finally persuaded her mother to buy her one that brushed against the top of her knee. Now some girls wear fishnet stockings, for fuck's sake. Oh, well, it could be worse. By some comparisons Girls High girls are respectable: Sacred Hart comes to mind, Sacred Tart, & Dio, let us not even enter that formidable territory, or as Samantha's friend Sara might put it *don't even go there girlfriend* which reminds Samantha of a joke Sara told that she had found funny when she first heard it but less so now: How do you drown a swimming pool-fill of Dio girls? Tell the ones with Chlamydia to raise their hands. She walks past the parking & administration areas into a building epitomising the 1960's Concrete style that characterises the majority of Datron's architecture (flat grey facades, long, low-ceilinged, dimly-lit corridors; buildings designed by people who grew up playing with Lego & wooden blocks

but forgot their texture & colour), up a u-shaped staircase to the seventh-form common room where, at the far side of the room, some of her friends sit around a circular wooden table.

-Hey.

-Hey Sam, says Josie unexpectedly cheerfully, as if she is bored with her present company. Claire doesn't say anything, doesn't look up, impenetrable behind a barrier of headphone transmitted music & reading matter, Shakespeare by appearances, ye ol' faithful of secondary school English teachers. Sara stares out a distant window, intermittently sipping from a bottle of water.

-What did ya do in the weekend? asks Josie.

-Not much...stayed home Saturday night 'cause I had to finish a stupid fuckin' g'ography assignment by today...who gives a shit about dairy farmin' ....I don't wanna be a farmer.

-Ya might marry one.

-How 'bout you?

-What?

-What did you do?

-Nothin' much really...watched some videos at Kristen's place.

-Anything good?

- Vampire Chronicles was OK...watched 'leven Things I Despise About You for the... like ... thousandth time...Kristen's like...obsessed with it.

-Yeah I know...where is she anyway?

-Prob'ly still getting dropped off by her mummy, sneers Sara, adopting this opportunity to angle the conversation to her own interests. -I had a fuckin' cool weekend...I went & saw Romance in Manhattan it's got Jennifer Aniston & Orlando Bloom in it he's sooo hot but I hardly saw any of it 'cause I hooked up with this guy Marcus he's sooo good at kissin' then we went back to his place & got drunk on his parent's Galliano & I got sooo drunk I ended up vomitin'...but I still spent the night at his place...we jist stayed up talkin' to like four in the mornin' it was sooo perfect but I had to leave early on Sunday morning 'cause I had to go do

this dumb borin' family shit that I didn't even wanna go to but my stupid fuckin' parents forced me to it was sooo gay...

Samantha & Josie look at each other, smile &...

...Adrian pushes his BMX between two rusted copper metal rails & after rapidly scanning left & right takes a drag from the cigarette implanted within his lips: he exhales a billowing mass of smoke that lingers in a lazy cloud beneath the wooden roof overhanging the bike stands. Walking past the horticulture & woodwork rooms - the curricular rejects secreted away at the back of the school - he arrives at the maths block behind which two individuals are smoking roll-your-own cigarettes & not appearing to be saying much. One of their names is Robert, the other Chad. Robert is the one looking out towards the rugby fields - at the green expanse between him and freedom - while Chad does something with his phone: texting by appearances, his thumb whizzing furiously over the keypad.

-Sup you two.

-How's it Adrian? replies Robert.

-Hey bro...jist a moment while I finish this text, says Chad before adding -It's ta Angela.

-Who's she?

-Some bitch he's spadin', adds Robert.

-I met her Saturday night at Ricky's place, says Chad in unison with an exaggerated motion, pulling the phone away from his body & looking up with a slight murmur to indicate to all present - himself included - that the text message has been completed, been sent, no erasing, no going back.

-What was she doin' there? asks Adrian.

-She's a friend of Ricky's missus, replies Chad.

-Is she hot?

-Yeah bro...blonde hair...nice-as titties.

-Did ya get anywhere with her?

-We hooked up out by Ricky's pool...I would've done more but her mates were gettin' a taxi home...oh yeah...& she's white.

This prompts a burst of laughter from his two listeners & Chad's grin to increase in width. It also seems to indicate an end to this line of conversation. Adrian now knows her friend group, & therefore her societal standing, her level of attractiveness - or at least Chad's perception of it - & the extent of their sexual contact. What more was there to ask: does she have a nice personality? Chad's final remark somehow made that question appear irrelevant. Oh, yeah, & she's white. Unlike the majority of Chad's recent sexual conquests, this undoubtedly being the reason why the same was not true this time. He seems to have a way of making certain young women almost instantaneously attracted to him, yet also a way of eventually making them despise the very mention of his name. If Chad had of possessed the creative foresight to adopt a sexual motto it could have been 'Easy Come, Easy Go' (pun intended).

-Did ya watch The Godfather las' night? Robert asks Adrian as he drops his cigarette butt, it bouncing slightly off the hard earth before being extinguished beneath his shoe.

-Oh nah...I missed it...they're playin' all three over consecutive weekends aye?

-Yeah...Sunday night on TV Two at 10:15.

-Mean.

-I forgot how cool the first one was...ev'ryone always says the secon' one is better but I think I still prefer number one...the hit at the rest'rant is fuckin' wicked.

-True...it's cool in the second one how ya get to see de Niro when he first arrives in New York & shit though.

-Yeah...it's gay how the third one is so shit.

-It's fuckin' bullshit 'pared to the first two aye...but I don't think Sofia Copolla was as bad in it as ev'ryone made out...she's quite sexy in a 'talian sorta way.

-Yeah man...fully.

The school bell rings at this point which prompts the three boys to recite a chorus of 'laters' before walking at a leisurely pace toward their separate destinations &...

...all fourteen of the law enforcement officers working out of this diminutive suburban Lockwood posing as a police headquarters are now contained within a low ceilinged white walled room, a sign above its single entrance proclaiming BRIEFING & CONFERENCE ROOM. *Motley bunch a buggas* thinks Mark as he slowly pivots his head in order to check they're all present *'specially those new ones*. There are three of them, two men & one woman. The men are both "bloody hopeless", will probably soon be kicked off the force like many of the trainee officers to become security guards or insurance claims investigators, but the woman – *Megan or somethin'* – is good, "committed", invariably the first one present at briefings, her notebook & pen poised for verbal to written transmission, often unsettlingly close to verbatim. *Too bad she looks like a fuckin' dyke* this undoubtedly due to her short, close cropped hair & the direct, unwavering, even slightly authoritative manner in which she speaks to her male colleagues - regardless of rank - Mark included, provoking him to reflect that *maybe the bitch needs to be put in her place*. She is the only female at the station, or rather the only female officer: there's Janine on the front desk who has shoulder-length blonde hair & smells of flower-scented perfume, & the old Maori woman who cleans the toilets who never says anything & smells of disinfectant & Horizon 20s.

-So what've the crooks in this city been up to? addresses Mark to the room's occupants.

-Armed robbery at Shell Franktown on Saturday morning at 2:17am, answers Gary, head of armed crime, one of the station long-timers & acquaintance – meaning drinking buddy – of Mark's, -two offenders of Maori or Polynesian descent carryin' a sawn-off shotgun & a baseball bat...both were wearin' black jeans & black sneakers...one wore a black hooded sweatshirt & the other a brown swandri...neither wore face cov'rings & we have a clear shot of one a them on the shop's 'curity cam'ra...shouldn't take too long to bring 'em in.

-Good...what did they take?

-'bout 350 dollers worth of cash... also cigarettes & a number of pornographic magazines.

-Pornographic magazines...the fuckin' savages, snarls Mark with a rasping curl in both his voice & lip –what else?

-A domestic residence...um...number 144a River Road was burgled some time 'tween midnight & 1am this mornin', recites Peter who has been working at the same station for nearly fifteen years without promotion, -'bout 1500 dollers worth of property taken...mainly 'lectrical 'pliances.

-Any leads?

-Not yet.

-What's hap'nin with those tinny houses on Shakespeare Street & Tennyson Terrace? directs Mark to Richard, detective inspector & head of the station's drug department.

-No word yet but we're keepin' surveillance on 'em so it shouldn't be more than a couple a weeks 'fore we can make another bust...also there's a house containing suspected methamphetamine dealers & possibly a cook in Prominence Summits so it might be worth tryin' to send in an undercover agent.

-Yeah...let's get the bastards, spits Mark, a faint gleam in his almost imperceptibly narrowed eyes &...

...Marshall holds the flame of the Bic lighter beneath the spherical glass bulb for fifteen, maybe twenty, seconds until the white semi-transparent coagulated powder it contains starts to send off narrow wisps of smoke, at which point he raises the pipe to his lips & inhales deeply for perhaps half the time it took to light it, holds the smoke in his lungs for half that time again before exhaling it out his nostrils in a loose cloud that spirals slowly upwards before dispersing across the cubicle's ceiling. Initially there is the relief of having expelled the contents of his lungs as he returns the pipe & lighter to his trouser pocket: this is followed by the characteristic sensation of the crystal rushing into his bloodstream & into his brain, an almost involuntary motion to his limbs, an energy in his body that wasn't there before that compels him to move about inside the confined space of the toilet stall that suddenly seems incredibly claustrophobic to him, a heightened awareness of his cramped surroundings: the droplets of urine & sole pubic hair resting upon the toilet seat, the streaks of shit at the bottom of the bowl, the single sheet of paper dangling from the roll-holder, the almost burning intensity of the light ricocheting off the white walls & door of the stall, drilling into Marshall's eyeballs. *Fuck I needed that* he thinks, justifying this pre-work session in the toilets of Roun Roun Roun & Rigo Barristers & Solicitors through having a test – *on race relations conciliation of all fuckin' things* – a test that he definitely didn't blitz & probably didn't pass, then having to start work immediately afterwards, all on a marijuana hangover. *Fuck I need a ciggy* he also thinks, looking down at his phone: 11:07, *might be able to sneak one in*. Exiting the stall after flushing the toilet to avoid suspicion, despite him being the only

person in the room, he walks over to the mirror & looks in it: a grin spreads across his reflection before dissolving to the mouthed words *don't be paranoid*. Before leaving the toilets he puts his hands beneath the dryer without washing them: the dry flesh usually heats up to burning point in five seconds but on meth Marshall can keep his hands there for fifteen until he has to leap away with an agonised yelp. First pushing the door before correcting this error by pulling it he leaves the bathroom & turning the corner by the noticeboard sees Stephen, junior partner at Roun Roun Roun & Rigo, frequent obnoxious bore towards & occasional drug purchaser from Marshall, standing beside the photocopier - a cup of coffee in one hand & the other pulling out all of the four trays of the hulking grey & white machine in succession. Marshall doesn't *wanna see the cunt* but unless he immediately returns to the bathroom any way of avoiding his presence remains a conundrum. Marshall is spotted by Stephen.

-Hey Marshall...how's it goin' man?

-OK bro...

-Good good...I've bin tryin' to get hold of you...I sent you a text Saturday night but ya mustn't have got it or somethin'...I was tryin' to score some pills but we ended up gettin' drunk & goin' into town instead so it didn't really matter too much but do ya reckon ya might be able to hook us up with some for next weekend?

-Um...dunno what's 'round at the moment, evades Marshall, already tired of this inevitable Monday morning conversation, albeit a distinctly one-sided one: Stephen, having spent a futile weekend trying to score drugs for himself & his yuppie friends, is consequently paranoid about failing twice in succession & hence launches into his self-prescribed task with intense vigour.

-How 'bout some P? resumes the junior partner.

-Nah...haven't got any, replies Marshall with a quick sideways glance to the left while his right hand gently presses his pocket.

-Any pot? this time the flailing desperation of Stephen's questioning rises to the pitch of such disarming obviousness that Marshall would be embarrassed if it weren't for the fact that he unequivocally holds the balance of power in this unfortunate relationship.

-Ah...nah...it's pretty dry at the moment...some places have been gettin' busted & shit, lies Marshall who is feeling the strain of having to concoct new & increasingly spurious excuses to cover the fact that he *just really can't be fucked hookin' this cunt up*. The way that Stephen's eyes remain fixed on Marshall's for a second or two longer than is reasonably natural suggests that he is isn't entirely oblivious to Marshall's avoidance tactics, he isn't entirely ignorant of the comings-&-goings of the Orklind illicit chemicals & illegal pharmaceuticals industry but his lowly standing in this hierarchy ensures that there is very little he can do to influence his present situation: persistence, & money, are the only tools in his possession & since he is all too aware of this humbling fact he fixes his gaze back upon the terminally frustrating photocopier. There is a slightly uncomfortable pause as both parties feel their usefulness in the discussion come to an end.

-Need some help with that? asks Marshall of the Beast-Who-Spews-Out-Paper, not out of a genuine altruistic wish to assist but simply to bring this conversation to some sort of resuming-or-preferably-concluding point.

-Don't worry 'bout it...I'll have a tutoo with it...should be fine soon. Marshall doesn't worry about it & instead makes his way toward the elevator which will lead to the outside world & the cigarette he's been craving &...

...Linda is sitting at the computer in the office at home, opening her emails as she does every morning although an hour or so later than usual today because she had to *rush off to the bank 'cause the cheque that was deposited las' We'nesday still hasn't cleared...god they can be bloody hopeless sometimes* she only has one email, from Lisa at Fuller Fashions asking if she was aware that their new range of summer dresses & blouses were now available to order, had she received their catalogue, was she wishing to order any of their garments? All in the past tense for some reason unknown to Linda who, yes, *was* aware that their new range of summer dresses & blouses were now available to order, yes, *has* received their catalogue but no, *wasn't* wishing to order any of their garments, or at least not at the present time, the catalogue given only a cursory glance before essentially discarded to the left of the computer to be interred within an inbox suffocated by more important & more depressing typescript pieces of white A4 paper – records & reminders regarding transactions, payments, withdrawals, automatic fund transfers, loans, accountancy fees – Linda shuts down the computer, turns it off & diligently pushes the little elliptical button at the bottom of the



monitor to erase the screen with a crackling, fizzing fade: a habit she knows is pointless as the energy use must be minimal to the extent of being negligible but she can't seem to break it & besides *with the kinda power bills we been gettin' lately ya need to save ev'ry bit ya can...Ev'ry Little Bit Helps as mum was fond of sayin'* . Besides, business isn't exactly booming at the Buxom Boutique either, the market niche in 'Larger Ladies Fashion' having been exploited to maximum capacity in Datron so that an industry that was essentially untapped when Linda entered it just under ten years ago had now become so flooded with contenders for the Larger Lady's dollar that it is nigh impossible to stay afloat, to keep one's head above water so to speak, let alone make any sort of "real" money from it. Which reminds her that she should *pop in & check how the shop's goin' ...best not to leave Janice in charge for too long or who knows what will go wrong* but in the interim decides to have some morning tea, having skipped breakfast so as to get to the bank as quickly as possible before the hordes converge, *the stupid arseholes inquiring why payments didn't go out of or into their accounts not understandin' that it was 'cause it was a weekend*. Having taken the ingredients for her sandwich from the refrigerator, a thoughtless task as they remain unerringly consistent – whole-wheat bread, I Can't Believe It's Not Butter! (the advertising drew her in), shaved chicken breast, tomato, lettuce, cheese & a few pickles – she lays them between the bread & is about to take a bite when the phone rings.

-Hello Linda speakin'.

It's Mark. He's *wond'ring if ya could pick up a few things on the way home?*

-Like what?

Like beer, preferably an 18 pack of Heinslager or, failing that, then a dozen at the very least & maybe some steak. For afternoon tea because it is Gary's birthday tomorrow.

-Well...I'm not actually at work at the moment.

He isn't aware of that. Where is she?

-At home.

Is she planning to go out at some point during the day?

-Maybe...I don't know...I might be goin' in to the shop later on.

If she does can she pick up the stuff?

-I'll see if I have time later in the day...why can't you do it?

*He'll be tied up all bloody day...It'd be great if ya could find time to pop in to the supermarket...it'll only take a few minutes.*

-OK Mark I'll see what I can do. With that parting remark she hangs up the phone.

*Lazy prick...why can't he buy his own fuckin' beer &...*

...the school bell rings – end of third period, beginning of lunch – which means that it is time for Adrian to stop attempting to understand the effect of various alkali upon an acid base & instead explore the effect of cannabis sativa upon the human mind. Or at least he hopes so, depending upon whether Chad has any weed because Adrian doesn't, having smoked the last of his on Saturday night, an uneventful evening spent watching episodes of *Twin Peaks* – he is up to episode fourteen of Season Two – before downloading some pictures of Sherilyn Fenn which although tame are nonetheless titillating, including a particularly good collage from some film called *Two Moon Junction*. There is just something about her two-tone dancing shoes & pleated skirts that turns him on every time he sees her on screen. This train of thought ends abruptly when he arrives at the back of the maths block, the usual meeting spot of the three amigos except today there are four, Robert & Chad & some other guy that Adrian recalls seeing a few times around school but has no idea what his name is: a sixth former he thinks.

-Better late than never cunt...this is Rico, introduces Chad.

-Hey bro...got any buds? inquires Adrian to Chad.

-Yeah man...fuckin' skunky shit as well.

-True...where'd ya get it?

-My old man bought an ounce off some guy...dunno who.

-Is he sellin' any?

-Yeah bro...keen to buy some?

-Yeah...I'm all dry at the moment 'cause I smoked the last of my shit Saturday night.

-I was too busy gettin' poon Saturday night to have a smoke, grins Chad, Rico being the only other person to respond to this comment as both Adrian & Robert know that he is bullshitting, having of course told them only that morning that he didn't exceed first, or at the minimum second, base.

-Is it indoors or bushies? asks Adrian.

Before Chad has time to answer Robert says, -How 'bout we stop talkin' 'bout it & start smokin' it, & the general consensus to this statement is positive so the four of them begin the walk out across the field to the back of the school where, a safe distance from any possible monitoring by school staff, Chad's car – a black beat-up rusted Mazda 323 – is parked. This has become the usual location for these lunchtime sessions, a comfortable if cramped refuge where they can smoke marijuana & cigarettes away from the ever-alert eyes of authority, revel in the pungent smoke that will shortly fill the interior of the car, *hotbox the muthafuckin' Mazda beast* as Chad is fond of exhorting on occasions.

The enter the car – Chad in the drivers seat of course, Robert on the passengers side & Adrian & Rico in the back – extremely constricted back there with the front seats leaving barely enough leg room, not to mention Rico is a big guy & furthermore one of those guys who spreads his legs apart as far as they will go, thus forcing Adrian to squeeze his together in the narrow gap available to him.

-Pass the pipe in the glove box, commands Chad.

Chad packs the cone, takes two tokes & passes it to Robert, then puts a cassette in the deck which is an infernally temperament device that constantly seems on the verge of breaking down altogether but miraculously survives, yet not without a considerable amount of tweaking & poking on the part of Chad. On this occasion it works straight away & the familiar strains of Cypress Hill's self-titled album floods the car, Chad with a certain sense of juvenile stoner irony fast-forwards it to 'Stoned is the Way of the Walk' which he proceeds to rap along to near verbatim, exchanging words here & there & mumbling when he doesn't know part of the verse, yet his imitation Latino accent of the nasally enunciation of the lead vocalist is nearly perfect. The pipe completes its figure-of-eight circuit around the seats & is back to Chad who, finding it cut, proceeds to repack it. A further circuit ensues: upon its return Chad inquires if anyone wants any more & is answered with -Nah I'm sweet aye, from Rico & -Fuck I'm stoned, from Robert, who certainly looks it, not possessing the tolerance

obtained through overuse of Adrian & Chad who have both begun rolling cigarettes, thus prompting Robert to do the same. Chad offers Rico one who declines on the grounds that he is in the process of training for boxing: this captures Chad's attention, who has been interested in ways of inflicting pain for most of his life, sustained by a diet of kung fu & Hollywood action films, manga cartoons & shoot-'em-up computer games, Mortal Kombat & Streetfighter. The conversation rapidly evolves from boxing to *cunts you'd like to smash* (Gary Robinson – 'Robbo' or 'Robbocock': assistant principal of Datron Boy's (sic) High School & sadistic inflictor of punishments - being the four boys unanimous favourite) then on to the ultimate way to kill your worst enemy: Chad suggests cutting off his balls & cock, driving a stake up through the exposed area into the chest, cutting off the fingers, toes, ears, nose & lips, gouging out the eyes & finishing with slicing open the chest to remove the heart, Adrian prefers wrapping barbed wire around the body & sending increasingly stronger electrical charges through it before dousing it in petrol & burning off the limbs one by one. Robert has the idea of inserting a hose into the stomach & pumping water into it until the victim suffers a brain aneurysm caused by excessive hydration. Rico simply requests a locked room & a baseball bat &...

...Linda parks the Terrano, removes the key from the ignition, picks up her handbag from the passenger seat, locks the car, checks it's locked, begins to walk away, checks that it is locked again & walks across the road to the Buxom Boutique where upon entering is met with the exclamation -Linda thank god ya here this woman ses she ord'ed a size 18 Winchester split side dress in Autumnberry las' Thursday & was s'pose' to pick it up today but I can't find it anywhere. This is Janice, inept at the finer points of retail etiquette as always.

-Well do we have any record of it?

-Not that I can find.

-Where is this lady?

-Jist over there, pointing toward the oversized bra selection, reminiscent of the handkerchief parachutes boys attach to their GI Joe or Lego men on summer days. Linda walks over to the woman in question: mutton dressed up as lamb, or rather lard dressed up as something that isn't square, streaky & overwhelmingly fatty - white semi-transparent blouse revealing a gigantic black bra, tight white three-quarter pants barely covering thighs the size of Christmas

turkeys & exposing calf muscles the texture & consistency of an uncooked lamb chop. Except five times the size. Her swelling feet overflow a pair of cork-soled high-heels fashionable for sixteen-year-old girls. Linda doesn't want to have to deal with this gargantuan fashion victim but the duty – need, rather - of the small business proprietor prevails so she says:

-Can I help you madam?

-Yes I told the woman at the counter to order a dress for me las' Thursday & now she's tryin' to tell me that it hasn't come in yet & she doesn't have any record of it whatsoever...I mean to say what kinda shoddy customer service is that I specifically...

-I'm very sorry about this madam...I'll make sure another one is ordered right away...would you like forty dollars worth of complimentary gift vouchers in the meantime? nor does Linda want to give away free clothing vouchers in an attempt to smooth over the results of Janice's idiocy but in the interests of retaining this particular customer no other option is apparently left.

-Well I s'pose I don't have any choice now do I...I was gonna wear that dress to my sister's birthday party tomorrow but it looks like I can't now doesn't it?

-Once again I'm very sorry madam...if there's anything else I can do for you...

-No I'll jist grab the vouchers & leave before I waste any more of my day in this place.

-OK...if ya jist follow me. Linda walks over to the counter where she signs two twenty dollar gift vouchers and checks that the order is correct – size 18 Winchester split-side dress in Autumnberry – while Janice stands a little behind her & to the side, pointlessly observing Linda's actions; the customer agitatedly drums her fingers on the glass-top of the counter & looks as if she is about to pay a visit to the consumer rights tribunal at any moment. At last she leaves but before Janice has the opportunity to begin excusing herself from all responsibility regarding the matter, as Linda knows she will inevitably attempt to do, Linda says,

-Why didn't ya send the order for that woman?

-I'm sure I did...I must have...I don't know why there wasn't any record of it.

-Well if there's no record of it then ya mustn't have sent it then.

-I can't even remember that woman comin' in las' We'nesday.

-It was las' Thursday & that's exactly ya problem right there...ya never remember the customers.

-What do ya mean?

-Think Janice OK...ya work in a retail environment & the customer is king...well... queen.

-If she's a queen then she's had a few too many banquets.

-Look this isn't funny...ya been stuffin' up too much recently & it's not on...either get ya act together or find somewhere else to work...OK?

-Ya not gunna fire me are ya?

-Not as long as ya pull ya socks up & do ya job like ya s'pose' to...alright?

-It's jist I've got so much on my mind at the moment...Paul & me jist bought a new house & Ben's jist started school & my mum's not well &...

-I understand...I've got a lot to worry 'bout as well...ev'ryone does...but ya can't keep on makin' mistakes like this...ya jist can't...OK?

-Alright...I'll try harder...I promise.

-Good that's all I wanted to hear...ya can be a good worker when ya put ya mind to it...now go & put those Tummy Tuckers on the shelf.

-Alright.

*Four more hours of this shit &...*

...this is the time in class that Samantha hates, the time spent waiting before handing in an assignment, the aimless unrelenting boredom when the teacher lingers until the last possible moment before commanding everyone to place their assignments at the front of the room, only waiting because that way she can avoid having to teach the class by making this particular lesson a time for any 'last minute adjustments' students might want to inflict upon their already lacklustre efforts. The reason Samantha hates this time, or at least during

Geography, is because of Rachel Lifton: in almost any other class, one that she actually has some friends in, these pointless periods are an enjoyable excuse to chat for fifty minutes, but not in Geography. In Geography there is only the She-Wolf herself, normally an annoying presence just beyond Samantha's right shoulder who occasionally burbles out some inanely & terminally idiotic comment but not on days like these, these throwaway days spent attempting to cover the remaining half-page of the two scrunched pieces of lined loose leaf paper that constitutes her assignment with scrawled answers procured from Samantha, who does at first resist but then becomes less hesitant before eventually handing over all of the eight typed pages of her own work in a final failed effort to prevent hearing again that shrill nerve jangling voice emitted from that cavernous mouth, freakishly large for it's face.

-What's that thing called that farmers use as...like...an extra paddock?

-Run-off.

*I wish you would run off...pref'rably back to whatever Hicksville town it was ya came from in the first place* however much Samantha tries to hint that she isn't interested even minutely by anything Rachel talks about - generally either what happened in the last episode of Buffy the Vampire Slayer or the activities of her various pets (three cats, two dogs, five rats & a horse somewhere) - Rachel continues on her self-involved rants, oblivious, *Why do the freaks always pick me to sit next to?* It's not like Samantha didn't try to avoid sitting next to her but nobody else wanted to either & Mrs. Adamson the P.E. teacher always made Samantha late with her stupid shower policy despite the fact they'd only been playing tee-ball & the first desk you sit at on the first day of Geography is pretty much where you're going to stay for the rest of the year.

-Did ya watch Buffy on Friday night?

*Fuck I'd rather slay you than answer ya stupid fuckin' questions... surely ya can't be that dumb that ya haven't figured out by now that I never watch that shitty program* Samantha would rather sit next to Ashley but she's being best buddies with Carly at the moment who is a stone cold bitch if ever there was one & Megan is alright but she is positioned across the other side of the room, not even within shouting distance, crammed alongside the photo display of last years field trip to the Waterholes. At least Samantha has a window seat so that when the teacher's recitations about foreshore erosion or effluent drainage & the faces & mannerisms of the people around her become unbearably uninteresting she can gaze out the

window - gazes become stares, stares become trances which on summer days become phospherene-drenched somnolent day dreams in which everything looks purple, she feels her eyelids slowly become heavier before they eventually droop shut, at which point she has to summon all of her effort & will to open them again but usually just pretty much keeps them shut until the end of class. Now, however, it is nearly winter & a limp grey haze hangs over the school.

-What's this word here?

Samantha looks across.

-Cow.

*I really really wanna voice my reply to that one.*

The bell of freedom does toll.

-Ev'ryone place their assignments at the front of the room &...

...it's almost afternoon smoko time, ten minutes to go but Mark isn't a stickler for punctuality except in the line of duty where it counts; besides, he's only been doing paperwork all morning, nothing too important, the usual easy going Monday morning to slowly get back into things after the weekend – regular visits to the lunchroom for coffee and equally regular visits to the toilet for a shit, a piss & a read of the newspaper – interspersed by hourly sojourns to the smoker's table out the back for a B&H Special Filter & a chat with Les or Gary. He suddenly remembers, as remembering generally happens, that he has to buy a birthday gift for Gary, something special because it's his 40<sup>th</sup> this year: Mark was thinking a blow-up plastic sex doll. So instead of making his way to the Zip machine or the porcelain palace he hops in the Commodore, mid-afternoon talk-back radio blaring when he turns the key which Mark keeps on due to the apparent intensity of the discussion occurring: an elderly man declares that there are too many Asians coming into the country while the show's host attempts to point out the hypocrisy of a Maori MP insisting on a decrease in minority immigration, the diatribe still in full force when Mark arrives in the centre of town seven minutes later, parking down the road from Nix Trix Adult Specialty Store and looking left and right before entering. There is only one other customer in there at half past three on a Monday afternoon: a disheveled, bearded, Swandri-clad late middle aged man perusing the



selection of lubricants, chocolate body paint and plastic wind-up cocks. The proprietor of the store sits behind the counter reading the latest *Black Beauties*: he looks much the same as the customer except for the presence of more grey in his beard and his wearing a collared shirt, discoloured from the specked remains of a hamburger that was presumably his lunch and sweat stains desperately seeking to escape the confines of his armpits. Mark approaches him.

-Where's ya blow-up sex dolls?

-Over there, the sex industry employee points to a few piled-up rectangular boxes wedged between the magazine rack and shelves containing bongs and other miscellaneous marijuana paraphernalia.

-Cheers mate.

There are five different types of 'inflatable sex aides' available for purchase: white blonde haired sex doll; white brunette sex doll which apart from the hair is essentially identical to the blonde one; white redhead sex doll with luminescent, scarlet imitation pubic hair; black sex doll with Realistic Pink Pussy & Big Fat Lips for Increased Fallatio Pleasure; male sex doll with 10" Fully Rotational Cock for Deeper Penetration. Mark briefly flirts with the idea of getting Gary the male doll before deciding it might be in bad taste, let alone the embarrassment incurred by having to purchase it. Nor does he think the black doll is a good idea as the one & only time Gary fucked a Maori she ended up getting pregnant & tried to get Gary to pay child support. Mark decides on the blonde doll & since there is still a bit of time left before he needs to be back at the station he scans the titles on the magazine rack. Every possible publication for every possible sexual fetish or perversion is there: *RimJob*; *Au Natural*; *Fat Sluts*; *Wet Dreams*; *girl+girl*, *FoodFightFucks*, *Pregnant Pussy*, *Teenage Sperm*, *Hot Cock Action*, *Mammoth Mammeries*, even *Barneyard Ballbusters* with a woman holding a dog in her arms on the magazine's cover that provokes Mark to wonder whether that particular magazine is legal or not before picking up a copy each of *Big Boobed Babes & Lesbian Lust*, then examines the video selection: most of the classics are there – digitally-enhanced DVD releases of *Debbie Does Dallas & Deep Throat*, *Sorority Sex Kittens*, *Weapons of Arse Destruction* – plus some rather more obscure titles like *Dungeon Masters 2000* & *Titanic Twat* starring Cate Winslut & Leo de Cockprimo. Leaving the video area Mark places his purchases on the counter.

-\$48.75 thanks mate.

Mark hands him a fifty.

-Could I get the blow-up doll gift wrapped?

-Sorry we don't 'ave that facility...here's ya change.

-Cheers.

-'ave a good day.

-You too mate &...

...an hour of work left, the methamphetamine has worn off & all Marshall wants to do is get home in time to have a session while watching *The Simpsons*. However, towering between him & cannabis-enveloped, parodic-animated bliss is a pile of folders that curiously looks taller every time he removes one from off of its lofty summit. It being an almost literally mindless task, Marshall has ample opportunity to think, his thoughts all centered around similar topics: *fuck I wanna 'nother ciggy, fuck I wanna 'nother coffee & fuck I wanna get home in time to have a sesh & watch The Simpsons*. A sense of lethargy created by the comedown hangs over Marshall, intensifying his Sisyphean mission, yet the seven cups of amply sugared coffee & five Marlboro Menthols he's had since lunch provide him with a sort of distorted energy, a certain hyperactive streak like when he ate too many chocolates & drank too many Cokes at birthday parties when he was young, a hyperactivity that reveals itself in the quick jolted movements that he makes from his chair to the filing cabinet & the song he heard on the office radio that won't exit his head however hard he tries so that 'Oops I did it again...I gave you my heart...da da de da daa' forms an agonising refrain playing on repeat in a constant cycle through his brain, a dismally cheery soundtrack to the excruciating, agonisingly boring task at hand which consists of the following unerring steps: 1 (One) – Open folder & locate appropriate name, often inconspicuously & almost always unintelligibly scrawled in red ink somewhere along the page's bottom margin. 2 (Two) – Locate horizontal file corresponding with name in folder. 3 (Three) – Place folder in correct alphabetical position *or as close to it as ya can be fucked 'cause they're all out of order anyway 'cause of the stupid motherfuckers who never put them in order & then get me to fix them up...I bet I'll be dreamin' 'bout this shit tonight...& the feelin' of doin' it will stay in my hand hours after I've finished*. He makes a pathetic sight: seated on an ergonomic chair in the middle of the

corridor, wedged between the filing cabinets and the opposing wall with an almost imperceptibly swaying pile of folders balanced precariously on his lap, thinking about finally finishing this damn task & leaving this fucking building & driving home & smoking a cone & watching The Simpsons & basically chilling the fuck out - until Marissa walks into the corridor. Marissa is twenty-five, legal secretary of Roun Roun Roun & Rigo Barristers & Solicitors & object of sexual attraction & longing of Marshall's for the just-under-two-&-a-half-years that he has been working there.

-Marshall...Grant wants ya to water all the plants roun' the office before ya leave today.

-But I gotta finish this filing.

-Yeah...he said to do it after you've finished that.

-Fuckin' hell. This is said under Marshall's breath but the slight smile that Marissa gives him before turning away - revealing her tailbone tattoo of a stylised sun peeping over the tight clinging fabric of her black pants, covering the twin hemispherical imprints of her buttocks - indicates that she is aware of his annoyance but doesn't care much; anyway, there is little reason why she should, having worked here for over four years without promotion and very little chance of it in the future, while Marshall is nothing more than the office bitch, one of the few people that has less say than she does & therefore she can take a sort of gloating if understated delight - not quite *schadenfreude* but a million miles from sympathy - in his wincing displeasure, so as she walks back down the corridor Marshall stares at her arse with wistful longing & acknowledged unpossessibility in the face of his rampant possessiveness until she turns the corner when with a sigh of fatigue mixed with unexpressed annoyance he fixes his gaze back upon that neverending tower of folders & resumes the systematic motion of placing them in the cabinet &...

...*Liquid Swords* playing on the stereo, an old Shaw Brothers kung fu film playing on mute on the television & Adrian, Chad and Robert are huddled around a bucket in Chad's bedroom - Chad and Adrian perched on the edge of the bed & Robert in the tatty old cigarette burned cream armchair by the window - smoking weed through a bucket bong. None of them are saying much, they're too stoned: it is almost six o'clock and they have been smoking for nearly two hours; they've almost finished off a fifty bag and another one sits in Adrian's pocket. They all zone out to the Wu rhymes and the RZA beats reverberating in the enclosed

space of the room, the Hong Kong heads and mock-Imperial frames decapitated and slayed on the screen. Chad every so often repacks the cone on the Coke bottle lid & serves another bucky: two for himself and one each for his two friends. The silence of voices is eventually broken by Chad.

-Wrote a rhyme yesterday.

-True...any good? asks Adrian.

-Yeah it's fuckin' raw aye...want me to bust it bro?

-Yeah man...go hard.

- Roun' here bros don't get capped or whacked...

they get jumped by Westsiders wieldin' baseball bats...

steal ya wallet watch & weed...

down that dodgy fuckin' alley down Worley Place...

seven kicks to the body...five hits to the face...

motherfuckers don't do diamond heists for ice...

ice is that white shit ya smoke in glass pipes...

that shit all of N Zs s'pose' to be hooked on...

me?...jist gimme a fiddy bag & a bong...

bitch pack that shit so I can get a rush on...

else roll up a joint & make sure its long...

'cause I wanna forget all that shit that I've done...

I don't wanna fight...I jist wanna have fun...

but it's so fuckin' hard when cunts don't wanna chill...

bro smoke a cone scull a beer bomb a fuckin' pill...

do anything as long as ya leave me the fuck alone...

I jist wanna find me a bitch I can bone...  
'cause poon weed & hip-hop's the only shit that a care for...  
that's the only shit you can get when ya poor...  
no car...no job...no motherfuckin' money...  
but I know I can get me a primo-as honey...  
score me some buds & put Enter da Wu on...  
fuck her all night...bitch put that track back on!...  
time for da motherfuckin' hook right now yo...  
I jist wanna get high...  
smoke weed to the day that I die...  
find me a bitch who's so fuckin' fly...  
fuck her to the day that I die...  
make hip-hop ev'ry nigga's gonna buy...  
keep on rappin' to the day that I die...  
for when the time for me to die comes by...  
ev'ry bro & sis who loves hip-hop's gunna cry...  
to see such a talent fly by...  
to that palace called heaven in da sky.

-Fuck yeah bro...that was fuckin' mean. Chad, in the process of regaining his normal breathing pattern, extends his hand: Adrian slaps his hand down on it & the two slide their hands back towards them over the other's palm.

-What ya think of it Robdog? inquires Chad, looking lazily over at Robert, still seated in the same languid reclined posture he has adopted in the armchair since his arrival.

-Umm...ya own a car.

-Yeah...well...like...I didn't use' to &...

...Samantha is at work, Pak 'n' Slave, looking across at Greg (or Gregory as she prefers to know him as) who is talking to a group of his workmates, recounting to them some apparently amusing anecdote - heedless of his every movement & motion of his mouth being watched, analysed from afar. Samantha is reminded of a dream she had just before she was awoken this morning which involved him: it took place in a crowded, brightly lit bar that stretched as far as her subconscious mind's eye could ascertain, packed with people laughing & talking loudly in pompous, inebriated voices. The dream wasn't exactly set during the present but instead during wartime, the Second World War as far as Samantha could make out from the evidence provided - the men all wear khaki corduroy clothing & berets, the women in scarlet dresses & high-heels & smoking cigarettes in long cream coloured holders, Samantha & Gregory included who are standing at the bar waiting for the bartender to make the drinks they ordered: brandy sidecars for the women & tom collins for the men. The bartender finishes serving the drinks, Gregory pays for them & he & Samantha take them over to the table where they are sitting with four other people - two men & two women - whom Samantha does not recognise. A conversation is in progress amongst the table's occupants concerning which is the best Elvis Presley movie - the women think it is *G.I. Blues* while the men like *King Creole* (upon awakening Samantha realised that this was an historical inaccuracy, but then so too was her presence in a dream set during the forties so it didn't really matter) -neither Samantha or Gregory say anything after handing out the drinks. Samantha takes a sip from her sidecar: she feels the sting of the brandy against her lips, then her mouth, then her throat. She looks up & across the table at Gregory; he takes a sip of his drink, puts it down on the table & looks across at Samantha. He smiles. Samantha smiles back, but awkwardly. Neither of them say anything. The conversation at the table continues but Samantha is oblivious to it. Gregory stands up, says he is going to the 'john', pushes his chair toward the table & walks in the opposite direction, away from Samantha. Samantha is suddenly engulfed by an awful, horrible, *sickening* feeling that she cannot let him leave, she cannot let him out of her sight: if she does he will be lost to her forever. She stands up, says she also must use the 'facilities', pushes her chair toward the table & walks quickly, almost frantically in the direction of the toilets. She arrives at a white swing-door with 'Gents' stenciled in black across it, pushes it open & moves through the entrance. She rounds a corner to see Gregory standing at a urinal. She walks up to him, so that her head is just behind his

left shoulder. She can see the stream of urine emitted from his penis, then his penis itself which is a decent size but slightly crooked, angled a little to the left so that he must correct this bias in order to pee straight. She says 'Gregory' in a hushed voice. He looks around, not surprised to see her watching him urinate. He says 'Hi' before he finishes peeing, shaking his dick a few times to ensure that the last resolute drops of urine are evacuated. Samantha wonders if she should grab his dick, caress it, but the opportunity is lost when he puts it back inside his underwear, pulls up his pants & buckles his belt. He turns around: she can feel his breath, soft & rhythmic, sweet from the alcohol & tobacco, against her neck. She wants to kiss him but she doesn't. He asks 'What are you doing in here?' She replies 'I wanted to see you'. He asks 'Why?' She replies 'Because I am in love with you'. He stares intently at her for a long time, a mixture of inquiry & desire in his eyes. That old song with the chorus 'We'll meet again, don't know where, don't know when, but I know my love that we'll meet again' is playing over a speaker in the toilet. He slowly brings his face closer to hers. Samantha in turn brings her face up closer to his. Their lips meet & Samantha feels that characteristic tingly, starry fizzing feeling, that sensation of imminent sensual sexual contact between her legs, her heart rate increase & her brain turn to lovely mushy ecstasy. Gregory pushes his mouth against hers harder, pushes against her breasts, her hips. He puts his tongue in her mouth. Samantha reciprocates by putting her tongue in his mouth, grinding her breasts & her pelvis against him: increasing that feeling, that intensity, inside herself. She feels his erection against her, feels his tongue brushing against her tongue, her teeth. His hands caressing, grasping her arse. She places her hands upon the curvatures of his buttocks, squeezing them, tracing with a sole finger the crevasse from his arsehole to his tailbone. He presses his cock harder against her, against her stomach, against her pussy, rubbing it against her until she thinks she is about to cum, until...this was the point at which she woke up, happy, a pleasant feeling invading, dispersed about her body & in her head, a feeling that stayed with her while she took a piss & had a shower & got dressed & prepared some cereal but had disappeared by the time the wheats & grains had done likewise. She tries to remember more of the dream but it is nothing but a hazy recollection now in the impure crowded noise of this afternoon supermarket; she is ripped from her reverie when Gregory glances across in her direction, a cursory look that may not even necessarily be directed at her but it nonetheless has the effect of shattering Samantha's gaze, his eyes burning into her, making her embarrassedly aware of her wistful desire & her nocturnal longing for him. Samantha is wrenched further from her preceding cerebral activity when her supervisor

Charlene, in a thick, distinctive Taranaki accent – “naki born & bred” as she is fond of exhorting – approaches her to ask:

-Ya able to worrk Sunday Sam...it's stocktake.

-Oh...is it?

-Yeah so we need plen'y of people to worrk...ya able to do it aye?

-Umm...I guess so.

-Grreat...thanks verr' much...ree'ly 'preciate it.

-That's...OK.

Charlene waddles off in the direction of the produce department.

*Fuck it all...I didn't wanna fuckin' work on Sunday...it's s'pose' to be my day off...fuck you ya fat fuckin' hick hillbilly bitch &...*

...Marshall managed to arrive home in time to watch The Simpsons: in fact, he arrived about five minutes before it began so he watched the tail end of the news while smoking a cone - played his favourite sexual pun game when Toni Marx presented the following day's weather - "...the weather tomorrow shouldn't be too bad for most of the country..." *ya not too bad yourself baby* "...a bit damp in the lower South Island..." *I'll make you a bit damp baby* "...the West Coast will be wet for most of the day..." *fuck you'll be wet for most of the day when I've finished with you* "...strong westerly winds will be blowing hard..." *fuck baby don't even fuckin' tempt me* - followed by *that fuckin' faggot cocksucker John Campballs tellin' ev'ryone to have a good night...I bet he'll be havin' a good night with the 'mount of cocks that'll be goin' up his arse & into his mouth...I wish that other cunt was 'roun' who read the news on fuckin' pills & P...Darryl McDonald or whatever his fuckin' name was...he was a fuckin' arse bandit too though.* He is feeling better now, having finished work & survived the drive home in five o'clock Orklind traffic & the weed has taken the edge off the meth comedown & he is pleased when The Simpsons begins - it is the 'Twenty Short Films About Springfield' episode - relaxing on the couch with a coffee & a cigarette, when Abby walks through the door, also having finished work for the day.



-Hey baby.

-Hey Marsh'...what ya doin'?

-Jist chillin' aye...watchin' some TV.

-Smoked some weed?

-Yeah...ya want some?

-Nah...not right now...might have some later.

-How was ya day?

-Complete & utter shit...Karen was bein' a fuckin' bitch at work & then she goes & pisses off at four o'clock & leaves me to clear ev'rything up all by myself...I should tell John that she's not pullin' her weight...hopefully he fires her...I should slap that bitch right across her fuckin' ugly face.

Marshall erupts with laughter at this final comment which provokes Abby to do the same but in a slightly less enthusiastic – and indeed less stoned – manner.

-How was your day sweetie? asks Abby, having lightened up a bit after venting her annoyance.

-Pretty fuckin' gay as well...had a test this mornin' on fuckin' Maori protocol bullshit & then had to work straight afterwards...I'm thinking of quittin' that place.

-What...uni or work?

-Work.

-Why...the pay's alright.

-Yeah but I get treated like shit & the hours a' fuckin' tedious.

-What would ya do instead?

-Dunno...sell weed?

Abby emits a brief laugh before moving out of the living room into the kitchen where she puts some white paper bags containing croissants – the unpurchased products from the café

where she works - on the bench & puts her car keys on the little rusted steel hooks attached to the wall above the sink & dumps her handbag on to the table. She reenters the living room where Marshall has packed another cone & takes the first toke. He holds it out to her while attempting to keep the smoke in his lungs.

-Want some?

-Umm...OK.

Abby takes the pipe & lighter from him & sucks on the pipe for a long time, too long; after she expels the smoke a coughing fit overcomes her which lasts for the following half-a-minute or so.

-Be quiet woman...I'm tryin' to watch TV, says Marshall with a slight smile.

-Hush ya mouth bitch, responds Abby, somewhat more seriously.

-Bitch...ya my fuckin' bitch woman.

-I wouldn't be so sure.

-Yeah right.

They are both quiet for the next few minutes, passing the pipe between each other & staring at the television until an advertisement break comes on.

-Was there any G left over from the weekend? asks Abby in a tone of voice deeper & slower than when she entered the house.

-Yeah...why?

-Thought I might have some tonight.

-Yeah...might as well aye.

-How much is left?

-'bout three mils or somethin'.

-Is that all?

-Yeah but it's strong shit...ya got fucked up remember?

-So did you.

-Yeah but at least I didn't fuckin' wazz out like you did.

-I didn't wazz out...anyway ya were feelin' up my arse all fuckin' night ya dodgy cunt...& I saw ya starin' at Michelle for ages too.

-I wouldn't touch that dirty skank with a fuckin' ten foot pole...anyway you were being a fuckin' dirty bitch...sayin' dodgy shit to ev'ryone...includin' guys.

-Why's it make any diff'ence if I talk to guys or girls?

-It doesn't...I jist wish ya wouldn't say dodgy shit to my mates.

-Why...does it make ya feel insecure?

-No but it's embarrassing...& they all want to hook into you anyway so it doesn't 'xactly help.

-No they don't, says Abby in incredulity, finding this remark of Marshall's preposterous.

-Whatever woman.

-A' we gunna have that G now or what?

-Yeah alright...

...the usual shit on the news – politicians arguing about the passing of some bill in parliament, Palestinian terrorists blowing up an Israeli café, a war in a third world nation where the United States are “thinking of positioning peace keeping troops to protect the freedom & human rights of the country's citizens”, crap sports results, crap weather, topped off with a “human interest story” about a fireman rescuing some old lady's cat that got stuck up a tree in order to cheer everyone up – before Homes shows his ugly mug on the box with his curly, tightly-wound black hair & his ridiculously prominent nose wart like some dim-witted warlock to inform us that later in the program he will be discussing the merits or otherwise of the latest parliamentary bill with Hellen Clark – an equitable companion-piece of horrendous physical features & skewed immoral values, it occurs to Mark – but right now “we are traveling to Wainouomata to take a look at the home of the Falesi family that has

fallen into a disturbingly...ur...um...disgusting state of disrepair through the inaction of...um...ur...Mr. Brian Jones...the house's landlord" but Mark can't be fucked taking a trip with Homes to the house of some whinging fucking Coconuts in Wainuiomata so he mutes the television so as to enjoy a little peace & quiet. Alas.

-What ya doin'? asks Samantha immediately & severely upon seeing the mute icon appear on the television screen. Besides Mark she is the only other person in the room; Linda is in the kitchen & Adrian is presumably ensconced within the confines of his bedroom.

-I'm mutin' the TV...what ya think I'm doin'.

-Why?

-'cause I wanna enjoy some quiet time 'fore dinner...that's why.

-But I wanna watch what's on.

-Well that's jist too bad missy 'cause I don't...& look who's got the remote.

He who has the remote control is king: anyone else is under their jurisdiction, their power, & hence the remote control controls not just the television but whoever else may be watching it. Mark thus controls the interest, the pleasure, the *happiness* of the rest of his familial unit, at this particular moment Samantha.

-What ya gonna do then...jist sit there & do nothin'?

-Yep...got it in one.

-God you're a gimp.

Mark isn't entirely sure what a gimp is so he lets this comment slide & says instead,

-Why don't ya go & get daddy another beer?

-Only if ya unmute the TV.

After weighing up the options Mark unmutes it but turns the volume down a number of notches. Samantha's demeanor changes slightly but retains a look of inwardly fuming dissatisfaction.

-Well are ya gunna get me a beer or what?

Samantha sits on the opposite couch, saying nothing, staring at the television, until she decides that it is in her interest to get up & walk across the room & as she does so Mark watches her & thinks about what happened to his little girl who used to want to, actually *offer*, to do things for him & while he still loves her & he is pretty sure she loves him he finds it hard to communicate with her now, not like during her childhood when they would playfight in the evenings or she would help him in the garden & he would help her with her homework & if they were having a barbeque – if it was summer - he would let her turn the sausages. Now she is too intelligent – far more intelligent than he is, Mark reflects – too independent, too introverted. He never knows what she is thinking, how she is feeling, who she wants him to be, the inestimable quality of the teenage female mind as she walks hurriedly and heavy-footed across the living room into the kitchen & Mark suspends his musing to look back to the television on which Homes is frowning, microphone in hand, inside the decrepit kitchen of a Polynesian family &...

...Adrian enters the threshold of the doorway, slowly & (he hopes) quietly closing the door behind him (he does not wish to encounter any of his family members in his intoxicated state) pads up the stairwell & upon arriving in his bedroom puts the fifty bag he purchased from Chad into the little wooden box secreted away at the back of the bottom unit of his chest of clothing drawers (the one containing miscellaneous, barely-worn items of clothing, mainly from his by-gone youth – the safe disposal of potentially incriminating evidence) removes his sweatshirt & sprays it liberally with sickly sweet smelling deodorant (further insurance against recrimination, as is throwing it beneath his bed) & puts Nirvana's *Unplugged* album on his stereo – his favourite post-session album after listening to hip-hop at Chad's house - skipping tracks until he reaches 'Lake of Fire'. Having now completed the necessary tasks he can relax: however, he is not quite sure what to do – he feels like a drink, preferably a glass of Coke, but that would require him to encounter, & undoubtedly communicate with, his mother; an effort laden task that he currently deems himself ill-equipped to handle – so instead he delays the necessary by looking at his eyes in his mirror (the bulging currents of bloodshot red have disappeared to leave only a faint trace of puffy crimson around their peripheries) & turns on his television, immediately muting it so as to continue listening to the music playing. The Simpsons is on but it is an episode he has seen many times before: he leaves it on in its muted state & crosses his bedroom, opens the door just enough to glance into the hallway, checks that no one is approaching, closes it again & sits down on his bed to

roll a cigarette. Upon completing this task he skips tracks again to ‘Where Did You Sleep Last Night?’ & walks, or more accurately climbs, up the flight of narrow wooden planks that constitute the steps leading from his bedroom into what is called the attic but is actually little more than a storage space in the ceiling above Adrian’s room, a claustrophobia-inducing annex used to hoard the multitude of diagonally circumcised wineboxes containing loosely congruent pieces of stapled-together paper deemed important enough to keep by Linda - the random reminders of just-under-ten-years of existence of the Buxom Boutique. He pushes open the small latched window – the music now no more than a thin spiral of sound drifting up into this enclosed space – lights his cigarette, inhales as he pulls it from his mouth & after keeping the smoke in his lungs for the customary period of time exhales it out the window, watching as it disperses outward until caught by a wind current that turns it sideways, flips it over & drags it toward the neighbour’s house where a television is visible through a window, its flickering beams catching Adrian’s eyes. He thinks he sees Homes on the screen - it is difficult to be sure from this distance - someone briefly interrupts Adrian’s view when they walk in front of the television; he continues staring at the screen, peering with narrowed eyes to make out details – the illicit pleasure of the stoned voyeur –as he continues to take routinely consistent drags on his cigarette &...

...Chicken drumsticks. Potatoes. Kumara. Peas. Carrots. Broccoli. The nightly ritual: the components change but the essentials remain the same. Checking to see that the underside of the chicken doesn’t burn. Turning the potatoes and kumara so they don’t become over-crisp. Making sure that the broccoli isn’t overcooked, so as to avoid it becoming soggy. Arranging the glasses along the benchtop: orange juice for Samantha, raspberry cordial for Adrian, water for Linda, probably another beer for Mark.

-Can one of you *please* set the table, calls Linda from the kitchen toward, roughly, the direction of the living room. There is no response except for the faint rambling monotone of Homes’ voice. Linda listens for a moment, sighs, & begins removing the necessary utensils from the top drawer of the kitchen cabinet, between the sink and the dishwasher. Samantha enters the room: by appearances she is not in a particularly pleasant mood.

-Can ya put these on the table Sam? Linda asks, motioning toward the heaped-together pile of knives and forks.

-I'm gettin' a beer for Dad, returns Samantha by way of implicit negation, opening the refrigerator door & peering inside.

-He can wait...get out some tomato sauce while ya at it.

Samantha yanks a bottle of beer & a plastic container of tomato sauce from the refrigerator before pushing the door shut.

-Well are ya gunna set the table or do I have to do it?

-Yeah yeah I'll do it...god the people in this family can be fuckin' annoying sometimes.

-Please don't swear Sam.

Samantha scrunches up her face & grabs the pile of cutlery.

-Do ya know where Adrian is? Linda asks.

-Nah...is he even at home? replies Samantha.

-Yeah...I heard him arrive home a little while ago.

The microwave beeps five times, indicating that – according to Linda's experiential knowledge of culinary chronicity – the chicken should be cooked.

-Can ya go & get Adrian out of his room...dinner's ready.

-I'm settin' the table.

-Fine...I'll do it myself.

-Ya could get Dad to do it.

-Pull him away from his precious TV?...I doubt it.

Samantha drops the final fork on to the table & walks back into the living room carrying the beer. Linda turns the thermometer on the oven off before walking hurriedly, a little flustered, in to the hallway where she calls out, in the direction of Adrian's bedroom,

-Adrian...dinner's ready &...

...To Whom It May Concern:

My family members are a load of beasts at dinner, like swine around a trough. Anyone would think it's feeding time at the fucking zoo by the way they act. Adrian, stoned out of his tree (why do Mum & Dad never notice; Dad's supposed to be a cop for fuck's sake, shouldn't he be able to tell?) shovels food into his mouth like a starving soldier in Siberia (nice sibilance *and* simile, if I say so myself☺). Whenever I say anything he either laughs derisively or pulls the finger at me: why the fuck does he think he's so special? Sometimes I'm tempted to go & show Mum where he keeps his weed, in his bottommost clothing drawer - he wouldn't be so fucking special in their eyes then. Mum is too busy making sure we hold our utensils in the correct manner & take appropriately portioned bites of food to notice much of anything important, while Dad just stuffs food in his mouth, swallows it down with gulps of beer & occasionally complains about one of the new cops at his work or someone he had to arrest who was 'a right little bastard'. When did their lives become so fucking meaningless & inane? Is my life going to turn out the same way, like some tragic human inevitability that I'm not currently aware of? Or is my inherited gene pool already so fucked up that I don't have a chance anyway? Is all I've got waiting for me toil, sorrow, sickness, pain, ennui, lethargy & death? Everyone's bored or angry or depressed sometimes but do they have to whinge about it every single fucking night? I mean, the world's not against anyone specifically, it's against us all equally, surely? Isn't that the whole point to life, to deal with the bad stuff while enjoying the good stuff as much as possible? I don't know, maybe it isn't. All I know is that I want to know, and preferably before it's too late...

...& Marshall, eyedropper in hand, puts a drop each of clear chemical-smelling liquid in two glasses of Coke.

-One & a half for you...& one & a half for me.

Abigail picks up her glass, takes a sip, swallows, screws up her face, suppresses a cough & puts her glass down. Marshall picks up his glass, sips, swallows, winces slightly & puts his glass down. They look at each other.

-Fuck this shit is disgusting...'specially when ya straight, says Abigail.

-Yeah I know...the effect is worth the unpleasantness though, reflects Marshall.



-That's true of most drugs.

-Yeah.

-What are we gunna do tonight anyway?

-Dunno...jist stay here I guess.

-Fun fun.

-It will be when this shit kicks in.

The television is still on but muted: a 'reality' home improvement & gardening show is playing - one of those insipid, uninspiring examples of media conglomerates appealing to the middle-aged, middle-class masses by featuring a two-in-one package of their favorite hobbies - renovating their houses & pottering about in their gardens which increasingly fills the programming slots of three of the four free-to-air channels. A house album is playing on the stereo in the living room; one of the CDs that Abigail plays at work, supposedly for the customers but in actuality a means of lessening the boredom of workaday life for the staff.

-You should put some diff'rent music on, suggests Marshall.

-Like what?

-Umm...dunno...like some trance or somethin'.

-If ya wanna change it then go ahead.

-Alright.

As Marshall walks over to the stereo to change the CD Abigail says,

-I really should go & have a shower.

-Don't worry 'bout it...we'll have one later.

-Oh we will will we?

Marshall doesn't respond as he scans the various haphazard piles of stacked CDs towering alongside the stereo, eventually elevating a section of one of the piles so he can grasp the case beneath &...

...Adrian stares at the television screen, barely acknowledging its presence, as his Mum & Dad do the same but in a state of pragmatic alertness in opposition to Adrian's disinterested gaze. He is oblivious to the details but by this stage all too aware of the generalities: two teams of 'worker bees' centered around a husband & wife partnership (it irresistibly brings to Adrian's mind some sort of Soviet forced labour activity, perhaps because of their matching blue & red uniforms) who must build their own gulag in forty eight hours; yet, following this frenzied construction & decoration, they don't even get to enjoy the so-called fruits of their labour & live in the goddamn house but instead must hurriedly auction it off: the team whose house goes to the highest bidder is the 'winner', regardless of what pitiful sum of lucre their labour, time & potential divorce earns them. Every Monday night following dinner Adrian's parents sit down in the living room, turn the television volume up a few notches & revel in the enjoyment provided by watching complete strangers work their arse's off, only to get fucked over in the end by either the nation's property pricing slump or the rules of this insane & degrading ratings driven contest. The sole reason Adrian is inflicting this spectacle of crass commercial excess upon himself is that he feels like a session: however, he must wait until his parents go to bed - well, he doesn't have to but it's safer that way, less chance of them catching him in the act of lighting up if they have already retired to bed. Adrian could be doing something considerably more intellectually interesting, considerably less psychologically agonising at this moment - watching a film, doing his homework, even subjecting himself to something slightly less injurious to his brain cells on the box - but he is in the state of mind in which he just really can't be fucked: weed is the sole thought inside his head & nothing else will suffice. Until the thirst can be quenched he must submit himself to this (increasingly frequent) exercise in ennui.

-That garden alongside the retainin' wall looks like a bloody dog's breakfast, says Mark.

-Mm, responds Linda.

Mark's clichés grate inside Adrian's ears. It is not that Adrian has any inherent dislike of such sayings - he uses a number of them himself quite frequently - but Mark's repertoire is so large & so timeworn that Adrian is certain that his father never actually says anything original, just uses an archaic, dilapidated stock phrase to express in an incredibly generalised & vague manner whatever it is he wants to say. It would be alright if these sayings were somehow fresh and enlivening, if they imparted some genuine homespun wisdom, but the very nature of cliché itself - & certainly Mark's neverending use of it - means that it is the

same tired antiquated ideas which are being expressed over & over again. Sometimes it makes Adrian feel a little sick to his stomach: it is not so much his father's verbal unoriginality but more his mother's unquestioning acceptance of these phrases she has heard hundreds, maybe thousands of times before. But then, she uses so many clichés herself. It makes Adrian wonder whether cliché, metaphor, is the new – or perhaps true – form of speech, whether humans have become so disaffected & dissatisfied with their existence & the world in which they live that they don't even trust their own perception & judgment any more, or rather their ability to present such perception in terms of concrete acts of speech & instead only provide approximations of the things around them: instead of saying what they mean it is easier to just shroud it in some worn out remark that only barely relates to what they are attempting to say. Humans are always trying to find ways of making their lives easier, less effort filled: maybe cliché, metaphor, whatever, is just a symptom of that, people too busy or too lazy to find the words to express what they actually mean so they just jump at the first five-hundred-year-old saying that comes to mind.

-The kitchen looks nice...that patio is tacky as hell though.

Mark doesn't respond.

Adrian has had enough: he wants to get out of the room & fast, yet there is a certain lethargy, a heaviness in his body & his brain that prevents him from standing up & walking out of the room so he submits himself to more of his parent's moronically simplistic statements & their ceaseless enthusiasm for vicarious home improvement & renovation, for retaining walls & patios, shades of paint & colour charts, Gib board & flush walls, roofing iron & skirting boards, a whole host of what seems to be included under the appropriately vague term of 'living solutions'. Adrian reflects that the only 'living solution' the people involved in this television programme need is a shotgun to the head. That would solve both their problems as well as his. There are only so many more Formica benchtops & tips for maximising space in contemporary urban villas that Adrian can handle right now.

-What's that bugger doin' puttin' Poly up there before those windows have been put in?  
inquires Mark.

-Not sure, replies Linda.

Now Adrian really is leaving the room, his lethargy expelled by the dire need to get the fuck out of there, so with a 'Gunna have a shower now' directed at neither parent in particular he

walks out of the room & down the hallway to his bedroom where he grabs a pair of boxer shorts from his cupboard before walking back out – dumps his t-shirt, trousers & socks in the laundry basket – goes into the bathroom, locks the door, turns on the shower, pulls off his boxer shorts, enters the shower, feels the exquisite, deliciously warm water pour over him, envelope him, wash away his frustration & boredom & anger with the world before he begins to masturbate about a woman he saw jogging when he was cycling home from Chad's house, she was about 22 or 23, wearing a tight white tank top & ultra-short white shorts, her clothing revealing her nicely sculpted, medium-pale-white thighs & her attractive but not enormous breasts that shook slightly as she jogged & he recreates that brief mental image in his mind to the best of his ability & imagination, perhaps improving upon it a bit, before ejaculating after a minute & forty three seconds, the semen slowly & cyclonically winding its way down the drain &...

...half an hour later, the G has kicked in & both Marshall & Abigail are as horny as drunken satyri, kissing on the same couch where formally they were smoking weed & watching TV - the television still muted but the gardening programme replaced by some legal drama, Tiesto playing on the stereo – as Marshall moves his tongue around inside Abigail's mouth while his right hand travels from behind her head & down her neck to stop over her left breast: he slides his thumb back & forth across her nipple which is faintly visible through her blouse as his left hand travels sporadically down her chest, eventually coming to rest behind her arse which he begins to squeeze as he does the same to her breast, feeling the nipple almost imperceptibly harden & become erect so that its imprint is now clearly visible through Abigail's shirt. Meanwhile Abigail removes one of her hands from Marshall's arse & places it against his cock – or rather, the fabric that covers his cock – which provokes an immediate increase in Marshall's erection & acts as the catalyst to his decision to remove Abigail's shirt, pulling it off in a frenzied, frantic hurry before he furthermore decides not to bother worrying about removing her bra & simply pushes it beneath her breasts, immediately lowering his mouth onto her left breast where formally his hand was, now pushing both of her breasts together so that he can lick them simultaneously. Abigail apparently finds the position of her bra uncomfortable or at least cumbersome for she shortly reaches behind her back to unclasp it, removes it & throws it onto the floor before doing the same with Marshall's t-shirt, licking his chest in broad, uneven strokes, then his neck & face as Marshall caresses her arse, sliding his hand ever closer toward her pussy before taking one of his hands from her arse &

applying it to her pussy from the front, running his hand firstly along her jeans, then inside of them before they mutually share the effort of removing them, then her panties so that Marshall can now feel her pussy properly, the faint & pleasurable resistance provided by the short, recently shaved or more probably waxed hairs along either side, the warmth as he enters firstly one finger & then a second into her, her previously expectant moans now becoming satisfied gasps when Marshall keeps his fingers inside her & begins to lick the top of her pussy before he sticks his tongue into her parallel with his fingers, bringing it in & out as his other hand remains grasping her left breast, one of Abigail's hands on her right breast now as the other stretches out over the back of Marshall's head, pushing him closer toward her, deeper into her before with a sudden, violent movement she pushes her entire body forward & down so that Marshall is now beneath her, still licking away & she can remove her hand from her breast & place it instead on her arse; she vigorously, almost roughly strokes her perineum before she enters a finger slowly & somewhat gingerly into her arsehole, massaging the sphincter so as to allow her pinky finger to slide into her rectum where it remains, flicking side to side in her arse while Marshall continues licking & fingering her pussy & Abigail increasingly creeps closer toward coming. Suddenly & unexpectedly Marshall emerges from beneath her body to ask,

-Ya wanna go into the bedroom now?

-Umm...alright, deliberates Abigail; Marshall's timing of this decision could not have been more inconvenient.

The two remain kissing & feeling each other up as they move haphazardly - stumbling slightly from the effects of the G - toward the hallway: Marshall breaks off & opens the hall door at which point Abigail slaps his arse, Marshall reciprocating when Abigail passes him through the bedroom door which causes her to leap onto the bed with a shrill excited scream, collapsing onto the heaped-together pile of pillows & bunched-up duvet. After jumping onto the bed himself Marshall positions his arse over Abigail's chest & sticks his semi-erect cock up to her face - Abigail takes it into her mouth & starts to suck away as Marshall thrusts his arse back & forth across her breasts in time to the motion of his cock going deeper & deeper into Abigail's mouth as it once again increases in size but after this goes on for awhile, when Marshall reaches the point when he thinks he is nearing coming, he decides not to come in her mouth, nor over her face, but takes his cock out of Abigail's mouth & asks,

-Ya wanna fuck now?

-Umm...OK.

He is about to reach over to his bedstand for a condom when he remembers that Abigail went back on the pill recently, a change for the better because it means he doesn't have to wear a fucking condom except that she's more prone to mood swings now but, oh well, you've got to take the good with the bad so Marshall enters his dick into her pussy, it slides in easily because of the workout Marshall gave her muff a few minutes beforehand & he pumps away while clutching at Abigail's breasts as she first places her hands on his chest, then his shoulders, then around his neck but lightly so that the airway isn't blocked off but Marshall nevertheless wonders whether she is suppressing a desire to partake in that kinky shit as he stares down at her face, not looking away, barely blinking as her face slowly contorts from a look of mild pleasure to all-consuming bliss; she seems barely aware of Marshall's presence, certainly unaware that he is staring down at her, at her face, his expression unchanging, frozen - stuck - while he ponders whether she really loves him like she says she does & - more importantly - whether he really loves her or at least loves her as much as she professes to love him, highly doubtful he decides & after this minor revelation his thoughts drift to a lecturer he had for a Criminal Justice paper he did last year, she was in her late thirties probably, big tits, blonde wavy hair – both of which moved about a lot as she walked back & forth across the podium discussing Appeal Committees & Prosecution Councils - & Marshall imagines her poking herself out with a dildo in a bathtub for some reason, his parent's bathtub, before he visualises giving her a titty fuck, coming over her gigantic breasts & her slightly aging face & her blonde wavy hair & Marshall, after fucking Abigail for three minutes & twenty seven seconds, pulls out of her & ejaculates over her stomach before moving his dick to over top of her breasts, the final spluttering droplets of semen falling over her tits, into her cleavage, one drop falling directly onto her right nipple &...

...two "Woman's Specialised" multi-vitamin tablets, one supplementary multi-vitamin "Booster" tablet, two Vitamin B Compound tablets, two 0.5mg Xanax, two 10mg Amitriptyline, one 20mg Prozac: the nightly routine passing through Linda's oesophagus as she stands in the kitchen in her dressing gown, staring out the window into the thick, murky darkness that envelopes the next-door-neighbour's garden before she puts the juice container back in the refrigerator & pads her way up to her bedroom, the sound of the television emanating faintly from the living room which she figures must be Mark watching TV, this

confirmed when she enters the empty bedroom, pulls the duvet back & props up the pillows on her side of the bed, removes her dressing gown, slides her body down beneath the sheets & switches on the television poised somewhat precariously above the clothing cabinet which she mutes on some legal drama & she realises that she didn't say goodnight to either of the kids but also realises that this inaction doesn't mean much, doesn't have any consequences any more because neither of them are afraid of the bed bugs biting or the bogey man paying a visit but Adrian does find it difficult to get to sleep these days, he is rather vague about the extent of it, a difficulty that Linda perhaps passed on to him hereditarily - she picks up her copy of the New Testament from off her bedside table & enacts her nocturnal bibliomancy, opening it to 1 Corinthians 13 where she reads, 'Though I speak with the tongues of men & of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, & understand all mysteries & all knowledge, & though I have all faith, so that I could remove all mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, & though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long & is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; Does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; Does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.' Linda hears the toilet flush down the hallway, then shortly Mark as he walks along the hallway toward the bedroom &...

...watching the late news on Channel One, Mark imagines sticking his dick into Kate Hawkesbury's mouth, fucking it for a bit before coming over her \$700 glasses & her blonde hair & the lapels on her pink & maroon jacket before that excitable Tony Vitch cunt with the big mouth expostulates on the recent All Blacks loss that took up half the six o'clock news hour so Mark turns the television off & makes his way to the bathroom upstairs, down the hallway from his bedroom where from beneath the sink he pulls out an old shoe box which ostensibly contains shaving equipment but upon removing the top layer of replacement blades & shaving cream unearths a collection of a dozen or so pornographic magazines that Mark now removes & briefly scans through in an attempt to select an appropriate publication for his present onanistic requirements – preferably blonde, big tits, a real fucking dirty bitch if possible - & arrives at a Dutch magazine which he purchased probably ten years ago or so, *Anaal Sletten*: he picks it up, places it against the mirror above the sink & opens it to a page upon which three blonde woman with big tits – real fucking dirty bitches – are engaged in all

manner of intricate activities with two dildos & their fists & Mark, after removing his trousers & underwear & running his hand over his balls to check for the absence of any initial signs of testicular cancer – a 46 year old drinker & smoker can not be too careful – begins to masturbate over top of the sink while imagining fucking those Dutch sluts up the arse before coming over their faces & after five minutes & seventeen seconds of concerted effort & concentration Mark ejaculates onto the mirror, the trajectory of the projectiles of semen clearing the sink at first so that half a dozen droplets of come slowly slide their way down the mirror until Mark grabs a handful of toilet paper & wipes it off, then wipes the cum from off the end of his dick. Disposing of the semen splotted paper in the toilet & flushing, he puts *Anaal Sletten* back inside the box, deposits the box back underneath the sink, washes the semen out of the sink, puts on his trousers & underwear &, after unlocking the bathroom door, walks out into the hallway & down to his bedroom where Linda is in bed reading, the television still muted, its flickering beams of light casting sporadic shadows across the room.

-Have ya turned off the lights in the livin' room? asks Linda as Mark once again removes his trousers.

-Yeah.

-What about in the hallway?

-I'll turn them off when I get up to piss.

-Must you always be so vulgar? inquires Linda, looking up from her book with a slightly disgusted look.

-Why...is this ya Holy Time? says Mark with a smirk.

-What is that s'pose' to mean? responds Linda.

-Y'know...how ya always act so bloody sanctimonious when ya readin' ya fuckin' bible...like god's lookin' down on ya or somethin'.

-He is.

-Yeah right...& pigs fly fuckin' aeroplanes.

-Why do ya have to be such a prick all the time?

Mark doesn't respond to this question & instead asks,



-Did ya get that beer like I asked?

-Yeah...it's in the back fridge.

-What about that steak?

-It's in the freezer.

-I might be home a bit later than usual tomorrow...it's Gary's 40<sup>th</sup>.

-You already told me.

-We'll prob'ly go for a drink after work somewhere.

-So I guess you'll come home sloshed?

Mark doesn't reply as he pulls back the duvet & sheet on his side of the bed & shoves his body down into the bed. Linda sighs, puts the bible back onto the bedside table & picks up the latest Danielle Steele novel &...

...kneeling on her bed - a Medieval eremitic scholar studying an esoteric tome or a Mohammedan prostrating himself before the Koran - Samantha reads from a ripped, dog-eared school copy of *King Lear*, the tatty tract having passed through many a young female hand before arriving in Samantha's who now submits herself to contemplation & subsequent recording of it's multifarious animal references: *how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to be a seventh former who has to locate animal references in King Lear* thinks Samantha who turns over yet another page in preparation to search out any potential or actual animal reference that may be lurking unseen, disguised amongst the inclement weather & the ranting old king & the Fool's Elizabethan jests but Samantha by this point is growing tired of this activity – the lines are all beginning to merge into one, they are all beginning to sort of sound the same – so after Samantha completes her search party mission onto the heath in quest of lost beasts or vermin &, finding nothing further, closes the tome, throws it on to the floor beside her other miscellaneous school-related detritus & turns on her television. Channel One: Late News with some 'exclusive' footage of rescue attempts following an avalanche in Austria; Channel Two: some legal drama which after less than thirty seconds of viewing Samantha realises is complete crap; Channel Three: Niteline with more 'exclusive' footage of the aftermath of the Austrian avalanche; Channel Four: a music video of some boppy dime-a-

dozen 'newschool' punk band. Turning the television off Samantha wonders whether she should return to *Lear* but really can't be bothered even though she enjoys it much more than silly old *Twelfth Night* which she studied last year or the pompous overblown nonsense of *Julius Ceasar* which she studied the year before that or the pseudo-romantic drivel of *Romeo & Juliet* or the cruel bloodbath that constitutes *Hamlet* or any of the other Shakespearian plays that she has encountered. With love auctions & familial ingratitude on her mind she switches on her radio, The Dredge immediately blasting out some lo-fi female hip-pop which characterises much of the airwaves these days ever since hip-hop became 'cool' for white listeners, a commercially viable selling point that any radio station or television program can incorporate & use for its own in a rather sad attempt to 'connect' with young people so Samantha switches it back off & picks up *Wuthering Heights* from off the floor beside her bed & collapses back into the heap of pillows squashed against the headboard & lies prone upon her bed, the rain outside becoming increasingly heavier as it slaps against Samantha's window while she reads of further exploits upon the heath &...

...the folks are both in bed – or at least Linda is, he has no idea where Mark is but he's hardly going to come into Adrian's room at this time of night – so he removes the weed box from beneath it's shroud of fabric & takes out a pipe & the fifty bag that Chad sold him & after packing the weed into the cone grabs a Bic lighter from off his dressing table & ascends the stairs into the attic. He hears the toilet flush down the hallway, then shortly thereafter footsteps, then nothing. Confident that no apparent risk of parental intrusion is presented Adrian places the pipe between his lips & lights it: the first toke makes him cough which always worries him a little in case someone hears him but after nearly a year of doing this nightly without any repercussions the risk seems minimal at most so Adrian takes another toke & watches as the exhaled smoke merges gradually into the damp darkness of the night. The television next door that he saw earlier is still on but Adrian can't establish with any confidence what is playing – something involving cop cars so it's probably some police drama – but the silence is getting to Adrian a little so he descends the stairs & puts on a cassette of Tool's *Opiate* that Robert gave him a few years ago, when they were both at intermediate school together, a cassette that for some reason was recorded in mono instead of stereo so that it only plays out of one speaker which creates an eerie empty effect that has always sort of spooked Adrian but which seems to fit the music anyway, creating a potentially dark vibe that is perfect for nocturnal sessions & Adrian, after reascending the stairs, resumes

inhalation & after this third toke begins to feel the effects of the weed; his eyelids start to feel heavier & then his thoughts begin to drift like the smoke itself so that he doesn't have to consciously think anymore, interesting thoughts just come to him & a slight touch of paranoia attacks him when he wonders whether the neighbours could see, or hear, the spark of the lighter or if they could smell the weed as it drifts across their fence line or whether they even know the smell of weed – they are Asian after all – but this paranoia soon passes to leave a comfortably relaxed feeling, like he is enclosed within a transparent sphere in which nothing else may enter, alone with his thoughts, & after a fourth toke & then a fifth discovers the cone has been emptied of all but ash so he descends into his bedroom & returns the pipe & weed into the box which goes back into its hiding place & Adrian sits on his bed for several minutes, almost motionless, as he contemplates what he wants to do with the rest of his life – he is currently drawn between being an architect or a businessman of some description, neither of which he really thinks he is suited to - & whether he will be able to pass the Learner exam for his driving license & whether he will ever find a girl who likes him enough to fuck him let alone go out with him & whether he will be able to finish that Science homework before fourth period tomorrow & whether he will ever be able to write a rhyme that is as good as Chad's – Adrian's hip-hop versifications are inevitably inferior to Chad's because they always sound too, well, *white* but not white in a good way like the Beastie Boys or even early Eminem but white in a really dorky simplistic way & while Adrian continues to ponder these topics he also decides to turn off his stereo & get into bed & turn on his television but there is nothing possessing any significant interest on so he inserts his DVD of *Blue Velvet* into the player & submits himself to some Lynchian madness instead of his own &...

...Marshall & Abigail both lie in bed, having smoked a cone & the effects of the G & the sex are both wearing off, a heavy but enjoyable feeling pervading Marshall's body & brain so that he knows that sleep is not far off, those weird surrealistic images from the subconscious enter his mind as a prelude to dreaming but just as he thinks he is going to fall unconscious he feels Abigail sit up beside him & leaning over, tap him lightly on the shoulder.

-Marshall...you awake?

-Yeah, extremely sleepy this response.

-Can we talk?

-Why?

-‘cause we need to talk about stuff.

-Do we have to talk about it now?

-Yes, this reply from Abigail rather more forceful than Marshall anticipated so he manages to pull his head off the pillow & shuffle his body up in bed a bit.

-What then?

-Do ya still wanna be my boyfriend?

-Aye?

-I asked if ya still wanna be my boyfriend?

-Yeah...why?

-Do ya still love me?

-Yeah.

-‘cause it sometimes seems that ya don’t.

-Why do ya think that?

-Maybe I should go back off the pill.

-Why?

-I don’t like it when ya treat me like I’m jist some sex object.

-When do I do that?

-Umm...well let’s see...how ‘bout when ya fuck me for a bit before comin’ over my tits.

-What’s wrong with that?

-I feel that ya don’t even really like me...like I’m just some dumb bitch that ya can screw whenever ya want & I don’t even mean anything to ya...like I’m jist a fuckin’ hole that ya can stick ya dick in ev’ry once in a while & that’s it.

-That's not true.

-So what do I mean to you?

-Umm...it's a bit late Abby...I'm fuckin' tired.

-Name one thing that ya like about me that isn't based on either my looks or how I am in bed...go on.

-Fuckin' hell...I was about to drop off to sleep...I did work today y'know.

-So did I...big deal...now hurry up & name somethin' ya like about me.

-Do we have to have this conversation now?

-Yes...I don't wanna waste anymore of my life with someone who doesn't love me or appreciate me ... or respect me...jist wants to fuck me & for me to look after him.

-What the fuck...is this about me not payin' that money for rent & food on time 'cause I paid that into your account yesterday.

-No this is 'bout ya bein' a complete asshole to me ev'ry day then thinkin' that ya can make it up by givin' me drugs & screwin' me...I'm not a fuckin' crack whore Marshall...I'm not ya fuckin' bitch who ya can get high then get to suck ya cock ev'ry night...I don't have to put up with your shit y'know.

-Are ya sayin' ya wanna leave me?

-No I'm sayin' I wanna make this relationship work...I jist wanna real relationship Marshall...not to be fuck buddies with a drug dealer...I've gotta life too y'know.

-I know that.

-Then act like it...when was the last time ya did any cleanin' 'roun' here?

-Oh is this what this discussion is about...me not helpin' out?

-Well?

-I vacuumed the hallway & livin' room las' week...& I practically do the dishas ev'ry night.

-Bullshit.

-Fuckin' hell...if ya want me to leave then tell me.

-I don't want ya to leave...I love you & I thought you loved me...but ya never tell me that anymore.

-I do love you.

-Do you mean it?

-Of course.

-Will ya try to do more 'roun' here then jist smoke weed & watch TV & think that I'm ya fuckin' servant cause ya pay rent & vacuum occasionally?

-OK.

-Good...I love you...good night.

Abigail immediately turns over & adopts a posture of absolute inertness. Marshall sighs, whether loud enough for Abigail to have heard he is not sure, turns over himself & stares at the lava lamp on the dressing table: its malleable, luminescent green jelly turns almost white, then strangely dim & fuzzy - a muted, grey-speckled black - before Marshall's vision as he thinks about how he would prefer it if Abby's hair was either blonde or black instead of light brown & if her arse didn't look so fat & dumpy in her work pants & how he would like her tits to be bigger, & her personality not so intense & her drug-fucked comments to his friends not so bizarre & weird &...

**WEDNESDAY...**

“I am a sick man...I am a spiteful man. I am an unattractive man. I think my liver is diseased.”

Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground*

*...when ya sleep ya body repairs itself: the cells recharge similer to a battery so as to keep the extremely sophisticated yet essentially simplistic machine that we call our body in workin' order - keep it runnin' in other words - but when we don't sleep it doesn't have a chance to do this & instead the cells simply degenerate & a' not replaced or repaired in any way but die off one by one in an amazingly quick succession of physical & mental deterioration...this is alright if periods of sleeplessness occur only sporadically or infrequently, but if the body is continually subjected to a lack of sleep the cells have no chance to grow & this cell death is manifested through physical & mental symptoms: an almost complete lack of physical energy replicated by a chronic mental fatigue; distorted sense perception, 'specially visual & aural hallucinations; mem'ry loss & an impaired ability to form new mem'ries; an increased susceptibility to physical aches & pains & sicknesses 'cludin' ling'ring coughs & colds; however, what is undoubtedly the worst such effect - worse than no energy & fucked-up senses & a fucked-up mem'ry & a fucked-up immune system - the worst effect of them all is the gradually increasin' & exponentially wors'ning depression that befalls the insomniac as more 'n' more brain cells die without bein' replaced & more 'n' more the suff'rer must acclimatise themselves to livin' in a perpetual dreamworld...the line 'tween sleep & consciousness is invariably & unavoidably blurred so that eventually it feels as though all of existence is nothin' more than an eternal twilight zone: all sense of control & responsibility for oneself dissipates &, as this continues over time, what was once a livin' dreamworld slowly & surely transforms itself into a wakin' nightmare of insane & degradin' magnitude &...*

...6:00am: the alarm clock radio jolts into life as it does every weekday morning, heralding with manic impertinency the night's news & day's projected weather. Mark is forced into premature consciousness as he is every weekday morning, forced to lie in bed listening to a voice ridiculously jovial for this time in the morning until Linda is forced, as she is on most weekday mornings, to declare in her barely awakened state,

-Ya ever gunna turn that bloody thing off?

-Yeah yeah...hold ya horses.

Mark taps the indented white button on the clock radio to cease its noise. He raises himself out of bed &, deciding that the urge to get dressed in order to lessen the extremely



uncomfortable effects of this winter morning just barely outweighs his urge to take a piss, he pulls a navy blue t-shirt over his white singlet, a pair of trousers over his horny devil boxer shorts & a pair of socks over his cold, calloused feet. After visiting the toilet he stumbles along the hallway to the kitchen where he half fills the jug with water, flicks the switch to begin the boiling process & goes outside onto the verandah for a cigarette. Reentering the house a few minutes later he pours the coffee & a bowl of muesli, takes the cereal & coffee into the living room & sits down on the sofa: after locating the remote control he turns the television to Channel One upon which the business news is playing. While rather serious looking white middle-aged males discuss the Nikei Index & the NZSE40 Mark scans various unread articles from the previous evening's newspaper & occasionally glances out the window to his left where he can just barely glimpse the river through the fog & the haze & what looks to be the first spluttering droplets of a rain shower. After finishing his breakfast he goes back to the bathroom where he cleans his teeth & washes his face with almost unbearably cold water, then returns to his bedroom – Linda has apparently resumed unconsciousness following her rude yet routine awakening – where he puts on the remaining items of his uniform, then once more tramps along the hallway & down the stairs to the supplementary refrigerator in the laundry from which he grabs the 18 box of beers & the pack of rump steak & carries them through the drizzling downpour to the Commodore. Putting these items on the back seat beside the box containing the blow-up plastic sex doll, he notices on the car's floor the copies of *Big Boobed Babes* & *Lesbian Lust* that he purchased yesterday but had forgotten about; he hops onto the driver's seat & turns the key in the ignition. Changing the dial on the radio from a talk-back station to MoroNZ FM which blares out Wing's *Live & Let Die* as he pulls out of the driveway, Mark has an inkling, a feeling, no, in fact knows, that today is going to be a good day &...

...-stoppin' at ev'ry station...

...waitin' for at least half an hour by the gum trees at Waianakarua 'til the midday limited rushed by on its way north...

...crawlin' by the wild sweet pea surrounded sheds...

...the flag stations which I still ignorantly s'pose' to be named after the flag lilies & swamp lilies...

...dark blue with pale white blue throats specked with yellow...

...growin' in the many swamps along the line...

-Sam that was bloody awful.

-Why?

-Well for a start ya rushin' it way too much so ya keep on missin' out parts of syllables.

-Like where?

-Like ev'rywhere...& ya intonation is way off as well.

-No it wasn't.

-Yes it was...do ya wanna start again?

-Not particularly.

-What ya mean 'not particularly'?

-Jist what I said...not particularly.

-Ya do realise we got the North Island champs in a few weeks don't ya?

-No shit...ya remind me of that ev'ry single time we do this fuckin' thing.

-How many times do I have to tell ya not to swear.

-If ya had any sense at all ya would stop both'ring to tell me 'cause it's blatantly fuckin' obvious that I don't listen to ya.

-Alright that's enough missy...now start from the beginning & let's do it prop'ly this time.

-No.

-Why not?

-'cause this shit bores me to death.

-Well maybe ya should've told me it bores ya to death 'fore I spent three hundred bucks on ya annual fees & another hundred for this fuckin' competition.

-Don't swear mum.

-Don't get smart with me girly...now jist do it once more before ya have to go off to school.

-Oh fuck it all...alright...

...the stone...

...the future 'cumulates like a weight upon the past &...

...Adrian sits cross-legged at the end of his bed, staring fixedly – almost unblinkingly – at his television screen upon which he directs a ridiculously fast racing car around city streets, mowing down pedestrians & colliding into other vehicles when the need or desire urges him to – invariably more often than is necessary – while he becomes increasingly unaware of his real life surroundings, the sounds & smells of this early winter morning, in favour of the virtual pleasures of speed & violent wish fulfillment which can not be appeased in his normal everyday life without serious repercussions so he continues to direct his chosen clump of pixels at 300 virtual miles per hour around a man-made replica of Tokyo or New York or Barcelona or wherever the hell he is as his sleep deprived eyes remain transfixed on the screen, almost merging into the images themselves, until his mother walks into the room.

-Do ya know what the time is? she asks.

-Umm...no.

-Twenty past...ya got ten minutes to get to school.

-OK.

-What ya mean 'OK'...ya better get goin' right now.

-Yeah yeah...in a minute.

-Not 'in a minute' mister...right now.

-Yeah in a second.

-Talkin' to you is like talkin' to a bloody brick wall sometimes.

There is no response from Adrian.

-Well are ya goin' to school or what?

-Yeah...when I finish this game.

-How long will that take?

-Dunno.

-Can ya give me an estimate?

-Fuck...I dunno...it'll take however long it takes.

-I would really prefer it if ya didn't swear at me.

-Well leave me alone then & I wouldn't have to swear at you.

-Listen mister...there's only so much of ya shit I'm willin' to put up with & if ya not gunna...

-Fuckin' hell...OK.

In frustration & unwillingness to continue this pointless discussion any further Adrian throws the control pad down onto his bed, leans over & angrily jabs at the power switch on his television to erase the screen.

-Are ya gunna turn off the Playstation...I don't want it usin' up power all day.

Adrian takes another jab at the power switch on the Playstation.

-Thank you...now off ya go to school.

In unison with this parting remark Linda leaves Adrian's bedroom. After she has made her way down the hallway Adrian closes the bedroom door, opens the bottom drawer of his dressing table, removes his bag of weed from the wooden box & places it inside his pencil case which then gets placed back inside his backpack &...

...on his way to work Mark hears an announcement over the police radio network that two Maori youths have been seen vandalising a deserted building site & since it occurred not far from where Mark currently is he decides to investigate, taking a right off the main road toward the concrete industrial estates of coloursteel warehouses & chipped tar-seal roads where the first rays of the morning sun barely illuminate the remnants of the night's fog. Driving slowly past the building site where brilliant green & blue tagging is visible on the building's skeletal façade, he begins to turn left down a side street when he spots two people meandering unhurriedly down a street on the right so he quickly makes a u-turn & pulls up alongside the curb, across the street from the potential offenders. As he suspected they appear to be the boys he is looking for: two Maori youths, about fourteen or fifteen, each carrying a plastic bag containing what looks to be some of the spray paint, each dressed in the *de rigueur* apparel of the juvenile street kid - baseball caps, basketball jackets, baggy jeans & scuffed sneakers. When they spot Mark they immediately attempt to run up the street but are halted when he sprints from the car & blocks their path; the effect of the paint they have been inhaling prevents them from progressing any quicker than a stumbling gait will allow. Mark holds out both hands at arms length to avoid them tumbling into him.

-You the two responsible for vandalisin' that building back there.

-No, immediately responds one of the boys, apparently the less intoxicated of the two.

- 'cause we received reports that two Maori youths have been spraypaintin' shit on a buildin' site back there.

-Wasn't us, replies the same boy with a look of bemused defiance.

-What's ya name?

-Mine? replies the same.

-Yeah.

-Joseph Rawiri.

-What's your name then? Mark asks the other boy who is struggling to maintain balance & has apparently been oblivious to the preceding conversation.

-Hemi.

-Hemi what?

-Jones.

-Well you two a' both comin' with me down to the station on suspicion of vandalisin' that buildin'.

This raises the ire of Joseph. -But we didn't even do it aye...I'm tellin' the trufh...hones' aye.

-I'm afraid I don't believe ya sonny, says Mark in unison with removing the bag of paint from Hemi's grasp, but as he attempts to do the same to Joseph Hemi decides it is in his interest to try & make his escape; however, his legs don't respond as well as he would like & after a few pitiful lurches up the road Mark grabs him & says, -Listen cunt if ya try that again I'm gunna hit ya in the fuckin' head with my truncheon then set the fuckin' dogs on ya...if ya want that happenin' then keep this shit up otherwise I'd settle down if I was you. Hemi surrenders himself to Mark's grasp but this acts as the cue for Joseph to execute his getaway, lunging down the footpath as fast as he can before skirting across the street into the loading bay of an industrial site, vanishing behind a giant green warehouse. Mark hurriedly pushes Hemi across the street to the car where he throws him onto the back seat before he opens the front driver's door, grabs the radio & says, -One Maori youth...fourteen or fifteen...wearin' a blue & white baseball cap dark blue jacket black jeans & black sneakers...presently in industrial area 'tween Carmina Crescent & Ellington Lane...attempted arrest occurred before offender escaped on foot...offender is intoxicated & possibly dangerous &...

...awaking surprisingly & pleasantly clearheaded from the GHB but a little befuddled from the THC, the sound of birdsong & the smell of rain emanating from the open bedroom window, Marshall hears the water from the shower colliding with the aluminum floor of the bathroom behind his head, then shortly the terse swiveling sound of the shower being turned off. He closes his eyes & attempts to regain unconsciousness: this is interrupted when Abigail enters the room, drops the towel formerly wrapped around her midsection onto the floor & proceeds to dress: first underwear, then denim miniskirt, then bra, then the application of deodorant with its piercing hiss before the sharp chemically scent wafts across to where Marshall lies. As she begins to pull on a bright pink tank-top (*she mus' be goin' ta uni soon* deduces Marshall) he asks in a gravelly voice,

-Off to uni?

-Yeah.

-For how long?

-Couple of hours.

Abigail attends the same tertiary institute as Marshall but he has never seen her there by chance: the distance between the art & law faculties are sufficient to prevent any coincidental encounters between them. Anyhow, both of their records of attendance, especially Marshall's, are lacklustre enough to make this fact not particularly surprising.

-Ya got uni today? enquires Abigail.

-Nah...jist work.

-What time?

-Not until two.

-Well have fun...I'm off now.

-See ya later.

As she departs the bedroom Marshall once more closes his eyes & listens as she walks out of the front door, enters her car & drives off. Afterwards there are only the birds outside the bedroom window that orchestrate a post-rain chorus which Marshall finds pleasingly harmonious for a while until, deciding that no chance of additional sleep is possible, he sits up in bed, grabs his packet of cigarettes from off the bedside table, lights one &...

...when Mark returns to the car following a futile search for Joseph amongst the scrap metal depositories & corrugated iron workshops he finds Hemi flicking through *Lesbian Lust* in the back seat, one eye closed to adjust his vision & a lascivious looking grin spread across his face.

-Do I need to put the handcuffs on ya?

-Nah.

-Then put that bloody magazine down & don't say a fuckin' word.

Hemi throws the magazine back down onto the seat &, after glancing around the car for a short while, points to the box of beers & asks,

-Ya havin' a party?

-Yeah.

-Bet ya could fine lots a good shit in the evidence room ta smoke aye?

-Jist shut ya mouth OK.

Hemi once again falls silent. Mark taps his fingers against the steering wheel while he waits for backup to arrive, before the boy in the backseat enquires,

-So ya didn't find Joseph then?

-No.

-Hope he gets away aye.

-He won't.

-How ya know that?

-I've been on the force for over twen'y years & I've learnt that not too many crooks get away with it.

-Joe's a pretty fas' runnah.

-Not fast enough.

In his rearview mirror Mark watches a police car – a police dog vehicle, in fact - pull into the street in which he is parked. It pulls up behind him close enough for Mark to see that it is Gary driving & Megan, the new & only policewoman on the force, in the passenger's seat. *Jesus fuckin' Christ...why the fuck did he have to bring along that fuckin' bitch?* Mark exits his car in unison with the two officers behind him & strolls toward Gary.

-Hey Gazza...happy birthday mate.

-Cheers Mark.



-Got one of the little bastards in my back seat...the other escaped on foot over behin' that big fuckin' green warehouse over there, points Mark severely & accurately, squinting slightly as he jabs a finger toward where the sun dimly radiates through the cloud & fog.

-How long ago was that? enquires Gary.

-'bout five minutes or so now.

-Any weapons?

-Nah...at leas' nothin' more than a can of spray paint.

-Intoxicated?

-Yeah...been huffin' that shit.

-Shall we have a drive & look for the cunt then?

-Sounds the go...what we gunna do with her? Mark asks Gary, motioning toward where Megan stands listening intently, alertly, a look of utmost concentration constructing her features.

-She can look after the other one in your car, responds Gary with a swiveled glance of his head to Megan. Her previous, expectantly anticipatory, demeanor instantly falls to a look of despondent dissatisfaction as Mark throws his car keys to Megan & says,

-Don't let the little bastard touch any of my stuff in the back seat now.

-Yes officer, replies Megan who immediately unlocks the driver's side door & enters the car.

With a lingering smile Mark opens the passenger's side door & jumps in. Gary turns the key in the ignition, makes a u-turn & drives rapidly toward the entrance to the cul-de-sac where he turns right without indicating onto a long wide stretch of road, one of the main thoroughfares through this industrial estate from which many other streets branch off & down which many of these streets Gary decides to drive in search of their fourteen-year-old fugitive. After fifteen minutes or so they have had no success until they receive a report over the radio that an apparently intoxicated youth has been wandering across a nearby petrol station forecourt abusing patrons: Mark & Gary know that this must be their boy.

-Let's go, says Gary a little louder & more enthusiastically than is necessary.

When they arrive at the petrol station a few minutes later there is no sign of Joseph so Gary parks alongside of where a grey-bearded man of about fifty, presumably either the petrol station's owner or attendant, stands gesticulating in the direction of the police car. As soon as the two officers exit the vehicle the man begins babbling off an almost incoherent series of instructions regarding the actions & location of the wanted teenager so Mark says,

-Whoa whoa whoa...settle down a moment sir...let's establish the facts...where is he?

-He walked off across that vacant lot over there, says the man, pointing to a large area of long ragged weeds & randomly scattered pieces of scrap metal occupying the space behind the petrol station.

-How long ago was that?

-Couple a minutes at the most.

-What did he do while he was here?

-Jist wand'ed about & abused some of the customers.

-Thank you sir...that should be enough information for now.

Mark & Gary both hop back into the police car & follow the route around to where the vacant lot adjoins the street. Joseph is not there so they continue driving straight ahead until the street veers off to the right: they follow for a short period of time before Mark suddenly spots a figure down the end of an alleyway, between two warehouses. It is Joseph.

-Pull over Gazza...we got our man.

As Mark leaps from the car & begins to run down the alleyway Joseph spots him & immediately attempts to scale the wire fence behind him; his plan of escape proves futile so he jumps down & tries to run past Mark. Mark grabs him by the collar, fleetingly, before Joseph eludes his grasp & continues running. By this time Gary has removed the police dog, a German Shepherd named Snuggles, from the back of the police vehicle & proceeds to run toward Joseph; Snuggles barks at an ear-piercing pitch & bares his teeth in slavering growls. Joseph, visibly frightened, backs up against a brick wall whereupon Snuggles lunges at him & takes a bite from his basketball jacket just above his hip.

-Fuck...ahh...fuck...ged this fuckin' dog off me...ahh...fuck!

Gary reins in Snuggles & immediately pushes Joseph onto the ground where the boy remains motionless, terrified, quietly swearing & holding his side in agony. Meanwhile Mark has removed the handcuffs from his belt &, wrenching Joseph's arms behind his back (eliciting a further bout of obscenities & agonised shrieks) cuffs him as Gary leads Snuffles, still barking & growling, back into the police car.

-OK sonny...time for you to go to the station, says Mark with a smirk.

He leads the handcuffed boy into the back seat of the police car, slams the door, enters the passenger's door & says to Gary,

-Good work Gazza.

-You too Mark, replies Gary as he starts his car & begins to drive back in the direction of Mark's car &...

... two "Woman's Specialised" multi-vitamin tablets, one supplementary multi-vitamin "Booster" tablet, two "Quik Pik-Up" naturopathic herbal energy pills, one 40mg Acupan, one 20mg Prozac, plus two Nurofen because she still has a headache from yesterday that she was hoping would have disappeared overnight, a headache that developed soon after she had to deal with the repercussions arising from Janice's failure to purchase the size 18 Winchester split-side dress in Autumnberry for that behemoth of a women, a headache that continued to increase in intensity during dinner & while she watched television & read in bed & lay in bed listening to Mark's snores & was still present when she awoke to the alarm clock after a little over three hours sleep. She knows she must go into the shop at some point this morning as a shipment of winter jerseys & cardigans are arriving some time around 11:30 but she decides to enjoy the peaceful quiet of her empty home for a bit, a home recently ejected of her two children & before them her husband so she turns on the television to Channel One upon which Good Morning is playing - an alarmingly animated American man is displaying to Mary Lambert the miraculous health-giving properties & immense ease-of-usage of a kitchen blender, all illustrated in an unbearably annoying high-pitched squeal of a voice, so she turns off the television & instead flicks on the stereo to Concerto FM from which one of Beethoven's cello sonatas bellows out. After turning it down a few notches she makes a circuit of the living room, calming strains emanating from the speakers. She realigns the picture of a Mediterranean seaside vista, makes sure all of the framed family photographs on

the glass-topped table are facing outwards, turns the cushions on the sofas so they are all symmetrical, bundles all the out-of-date newspapers & magazines on the coffee table into piles, removes a cobweb lodged by a renegade spider between the DVD player & the back of the single-seater chair, swivels the antique china teacups & saucers on the wooden cabinet so their Victoriana designs of happy playing children & society ladies holding parasols are visible to any potential hypothetical visitor who may pay a visit at a quarter-to-ten on a Tuesday morning. Having completed her self-prescribed task she decides that this burst of cleaning activity deserves a coffee – white, two sugars – which she promptly makes before descending the stairs to the office where she opens her emails as she does every weekday morning &...

...sitting on a wooden stool which invariably produces a pain in your arse within minutes of placing your posterior upon it, elbows planted upon the graffiti-strewn wooden bench that is one of many that line this chemistry classroom, staring alternately between the periodic table chart on the wall immediately before him, the eggshell face of the egghead chemistry teacher reading out the attendance roll in his usual perfunctory manner or the assortment of dull-looking countenances that constitute the members of this particular ‘tutor group’. Why, however, this haphazard array of people thrown together as a means of marking attendance & issuing punishment for failure to attend this tedious daily event should be called a ‘tutor group’ is beyond Adrian’s understanding. Never once has Adrian either received or provided anything even vaguely resembling tutorship in this room. If he had of maybe it wouldn’t seem such a complete waste of time every morning - it could potentially possess some actual purpose - but that apparently is not to be. As far as Adrian’s experience can testify, it is fifteen minutes devoted entirely to the marking off of everybody’s name in a red roll book, the humiliation & subsequent provision of punishment - generally involving copying out one hundred times some inane & ill-begotten sentence such as ‘Punctuality is a virtue so therefore I will not be late to tutor group’ - to those who arrive late & following these unnecessarily prolonged tasks there is nothing to do for the remaining ten minutes or so but to talk to the person seated beside you: in Adrian’s case this is Sam Cottings.

-Ya played Battlefield Gulf? inquires Sam.

-Nah...but I heard it’s the shit though, responds Adrian.

-Yeah man it's fuckin' mean as aye there's like seventeen maps in total...it's fully cool.

-Cool.

-Yeah man but Battlefield Bosnia's s'pose' to be comin' out some time next year...it's gunna be even way better still...it's s'pose' to have like over twenty maps in like bush & mountains & cities & s'posedly it's gunna include heaps of shell artillery &...

At this point Sam is broken off from his recommendation of the future merits of this particular computer game by a spray of water that connects with the backs of both boys, yet not quite to the extent that it has with Theodore Curtis', the other boy currently sharing the chemistry bench with Adrian & Sam. Theodore – one of those fair-haired, pale skinned, softly spoken boys who you just know will eventually discover the fact that he's gay – acts as the fifth form prey for the sixth form predators lurking along the benches behind him, biding their time in noisy, expletive & dirty humour-filled discussions about girls & sex & cars & sports & gays & blacks as they wait for the perfect opportunity to pounce, unloading a test tube of water onto the back of their latest victim, usually Theodore (never Theo for that would be a sign of familiarity, affection, & anyhow, he apparently prefers the lengthened version of his name) although Adrian & Sam have both acted as victims on various unexpected & unannounced occasions.

-Go away, commands Theodore with as much effort & patience as he can muster.

-What ya gunna do 'bout it ya fuckin' homo? replies one of the rather more hostile & frightening sixth formers.

Theodore just sighs & turns around.

... Yeah so like there's gunna be over thirty diff'rent guns from laser sighted sniper rifles to double barreled grenade launchers to anti-tank & anti-aircraft weapons to...

Once more a web of water disperses itself over the three boys along the bench, this time not ricocheting off Theodore's back but rather his head which causes him to spin around in wrathful fury & exclaim,

-Fuck off.

-What the fuck did ya say? responds the same sixth former, a particularly ugly, goblin-faced specimen who goes by the name of Paul.

-I said fuck off.

-Fuck you faggot...fuckin' cocksuckah.

Under his breath, so quietly that Adrian & Sam barely hear what he says, Theodore whispers,

-You're the only cocksucker around here motherfucker.

-What da fuck did ya jist say? asks Paul once more.

Theodore does not reply.

-Oi...faggot...what da fuck did ya say?

Theodore spins around.

-I said you're the only cocksucker around here motherfucker, blurted out with a mixture of exasperation & resigned yet dignified acceptance of this agonisingly familiar situation.

Paul does not say anything for a matter of seconds, simply stares wide-eyed, anger burning inside his brain, until his friend Fenster (Adrian has never discovered whether this is his Christian name or surname, not that it particularly matters) directs at Theodore,

-Well I saw ya givin' a blowjob to ya mate Ian in the toilets ya dirty queer.

The majority of the sixth formers, including – most raucously apart from Fenster – Paul, erupt into laughter until seconds later the bell signaling the beginning of first period rings & all of the boys - the sixth formers with their backpacks emblazoned with the names of rock bands, a slightly wet Adrian & Sam, & a considerably wetter Theodore - exit out the door into the damp chilly morning mist that habitually settles in the concrete courtyard outside &...

**Chapter Nine: Screenplay Fragment (*Eleven A'Bier Place*).**

An extract from pp.202-4 is from Janet Frame's *An Angel at my Table* Random House, Auckland, 2000 (1984) pp.203-5

**INT. ADRIAN'S BEDROOM - MORNING**

All is deathly still and quiet. Through the early morning darkness we can just make out the face of a teenage boy, **ADRIAN**, whose head provides a faint contrast to the white pillow upon which it rests. His eyes are open, apparently staring at the ceiling. The illuminated red display on his bedside alarm clock reads 4:07. After a short time Adrian's voice - intelligent but colloquial - emanates in voice-over from the darkness.

**ADRIAN**

(voice-over)

Have ya evah lay awake at four in the mornin', unable to get ta sleep? All ya wanna do is fall unconscious - ya body exhausted, ya mind screamin' out in desperate agony with the knowledge that in less than four hours ya gonna have ta get up and do the same inane, depressin' shit ya did yesterday, and the day before that, and the thousands of days made up of tens a thousands of hours before that - but the harder ya try to sleep the more awake ya are. Ya lie in a pool of sweat: the result of ya own nervous, frustrated energy as the ceilin' stares down at you, invisible but ever-present in the all-consumin' darkness, tauntin' ya inability to achieve this most basic a human functions. Meanwhile ya dwell 'pon the nature of insomnia: that menacin' nocturnal presence, that phantasm that insists on keepin' ya black ringed, heavy lidded eyes open and screamin' the thoughts that race about ya brain.



CUT TO

### OPENING CREDIT SEQUENCE

The credits roll to Pink Floyd's 'Careful with that Axe, Eugene'. When Roger Waters' final banshee-like scream rips across the soundtrack we cut to the identical shot which accompanied **ADRIAN'S** voice-over, except that it is now considerably lighter: morning has arrived. The soundtrack now consists of the piercing, intermittent tones of the alarm clock which reads 7:30. **ADRIAN** groans, rubs sleep from his eyes, scratches his tousled-haired head, leans over and slaps the alarm clock, ceasing its noise. He slowly, lethargically, raises himself to a vertical position, rubs his eyes again and removes himself from his bed. Visibly shivering from the early winter chill he puts a pair of grey trousers over his love heart boxer shorts, followed by a pair of woolen socks. He sprays deodorant across his armpits, then hurriedly pulls on a grey shirt over his white singlet followed by a woolen maroon vest.

### ADRIAN

Fuck, fuck, fuck...es ist sehr kalt,  
jahr.

Like the living dead he somnambulantlly walks out of his bedroom, down a carpeted white walled hallway and down a stairway, flanked on either side by cheap glass-embalmed reproductions of two paintings: one, Degas' dancers; the other, Monet's lilies. He enters the **KITCHEN** - modern, middle-class, filled with affordable appliances and chrome accessories - removes two slices of white toast bread from a bag sitting on the benchtop and drops them into the nearby toaster. He grabs a container of butter from the refrigerator and slams the door. Held to the door by a magnet advertising

some product or service is a photograph of **ADRIAN'S** family, standing alongside a stone memorial: in addition to Adrian there is a middle-aged man - his father **MARK** - a middle-aged woman - his mother **LINDA** - a man in his early-to-mid twenties - his brother **MARSHALL** - and a girl in her mid-to-late teens - his sister **SAMANTHA**. He stares at the photograph: hypnotised, transfixed, dazed. While the following voice-over occurs **ADRIAN'S** POV shot of the photograph slowly zooms in until it occupies the entire screen.

### **ADRIAN**

(voice-over)

There we are, my family and I, for all intents and purposes looking as happy and contented as any comfortably well-off but certainly not wealthy family can reasonably be expected to be. We're standing beside a stone monument somewhere up north, I have no idea exactly where: the photo' a relic of a forgotten, momentary point in time void of any significant emotional triggers. I try to remember how old I was when it was taken: eleven or twelve maybe, but just as easily fourteen for all I can remember. A time when we were happy, when *I* was happy, when I felt that my life stretched out ahead of me like the sky on a beautiful summer's day; when I didn't constantly feel that some terrible, catastrophic event was going to happen to me at any moment.

The slices of toast suddenly pop out of the toaster, jarring **ADRIAN** from his reverie.

**INT. POLICE STATION - MORNING**

**ADRIAN'S** father **MARK** sits at his desk in his office, reading the *New Zealand Herald's* sport section and sporadically sipping from a cup of black coffee. The morning sun, partially obscured by the overcast conditions, just manages to peer through the window to **MARK'S** right. A screen saver of Rachel Hunter adopting a provocative pose occupies the computer screen in front of **MARK**; on the walls of his office are an FHM calendar, a large detailed map of Datron and posters with the slogans 'If you Drink and Drive You're a Bloody Idiot' and 'Cab it or Cop it' written on them in bold font. **MARK** suddenly slams down the sport pages, slurps down the rest of his coffee and picks up the national news section. Shortly a slightly nervous-looking uniformed man in his mid-to-late twenties - **EWAN** - stands at the open entrance to **MARK'S** office and enquires:

**EWAN**

What's up boss?

**MARK**

Bloody Black Caps lost to those Currymunchers again...oh, and wild fuckin' animals have been roamin' 'roun' South Orklin 'tacking old ladies...so nothin' new I guess.

**EWAN**

(confused)

What, rabid dogs?

**MARK**

Nah, bloody coconuts...oh, and before ya pop off be a mate and put the jug on won't ya, I could kill for another coffee.

**EWAN**

Right Chief.

**EWAN** walks off; **MARK** resumes reading his newspaper.

**INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING**

**MARK'S** wife **LINDA** sits upon a white sofa in her living room, sipping a cup of white coffee, a frown spread across her face. Standing halfway across the room is her daughter **SAMANTHA**, reading from a sheet of white paper, also frowning.

**SAMANTHA**

The future accumulates like a weight upon the past. The weight upon the earliest years is easier to remove to let that time spring up like grass that has been crushed. The years following childhood become welded to their future, massed like stone, and often the time beneath cannot spring back into growth like new grass: it lies bled of its green in a new shape with those frail bloodless sprouts of another, unfamiliar time, entangled one with the other beneath the stone.

**LINDA**

(obviously dissatisfied)

It's still not good enough Sam.

**SAMANTHA**

(petulantly)

Why not?

**LINDA**

Because ya intonation is way off...  
remember, it's gotta be perfect if  
we've got any chance whatsoever of  
winnin' the North Island Champs.

**SAMANTHA**

(under her breath)

Who gives a shit?

**LINDA**

What did you say?

**SAMANTHA**

Nothin'.

**LINDA**

Now jist practice it once more before  
ya go off ta school.

**SAMANTHA**

Oh for fuck's sake.

**LINDA**

(authoritatively)

Hurry up missy, I haven't got all  
day...I've gotta get ta work too ya  
know.

**SAMANTHA**

(frustrated)

Yeah, yeah, whatever.

**LINDA**

Start from the beginning of the following page.

**SAMANTHA**

The Sunday slow train, a goods train with a passenger carriage at the end, took seven hours to travel the seventy-eight miles between Oamuru and Dunedin, stopping at every station, waiting for at least half an hour by the gum trees at Wainakarua until the midday Limited rushed by on its way north, crawlin' by the wild-sweet-pea-surrounded sheds - the 'flag stations' which I still ignorantly supposed to be named after the flag-lilies or swamp lilies, dark blue with pale white-blue throats specked with yellow, growing in the many swamps along the line.

**INT. MARSHALL'S BEDROOM - MORNING**

Asleep in a queen-sized bed is **LINDA'S** eldest son **MARSHALL**; beside him, also asleep, is his girlfriend **ABIGAIL**. The morning sun shines through the bedroom window to the left of the bed. **MARSHALL** slowly opens his eyes, closes them again, and then quickly opens them and looks at the alarm clock to the bed's right. It reads 8:14. **MARSHALL** promptly sits upright in bed with a concerned expression on his face.

**MARSHALL**

Jesus...that fuckin' test is gunna start  
in fifteen fuckin' minutes.

**MARSHALL'S** voice prompts **ABIGAIL** to awaken, who emits a slight  
sigh and rolls over towards **MARSHALL**.

**ABIGAIL**

(groggily)

Mornin' Marsh'.

**MARSHALL**

Hey Ab'...sleep well?

Without waiting for her to reply he leans over and kisses her:  
a peck on the lips evolves into a passionate kiss, which  
evolves further into full-scale frenching. Shortly **MARSHALL**  
removes her faded black t-shirt and while caressing and  
rubbing her right nipple kisses, licks and sucks her left  
nipple, then does the same to her chest and stomach before his  
head disappears beneath the bed sheets.

**INT. KITCHEN - MORNING**

**LINDA** habitually removes eight variegated pills from six  
containers sitting upon the benchtop and swallows them down in  
succession with the aid of a glass of orange juice. She picks  
up her white coffee, walks into the **LIVING ROOM**, sits down  
upon the same sofa she was sitting on earlier and removes the  
remote controller from the glass-topped coffee table before  
her, strewn with various newspapers, magazines, advertising  
flyers and so forth. She switches on the television and  
watches a programme in which an attractive blonde-haired woman  
informs the viewers that after the advertisement break a

certain Dr. Rosemary Phillips will tell them how to lose weight, stay healthy and feel great, all through the power of positive thinking.

**INT. MARSHALL'S CAR - MORNING**

To the insistent, thumping hard-house bass of Lisa Pin-Up's 'Future Acid House', we accompany **MARSHALL** in his silver Toyota Levin through the congested mid-morning streets of the Orklin CBD. Attempting to arrive at university in time for his test, he winds in and out of traffic like a Formula One driver, making risky and often ludicrously perilous maneuvers between lanes. His eyes continually scan from the front windscreen to the rear-view mirror to the wing mirrors; his left hand meanwhile moves frenetically between the steering wheel and the gear stick.

**EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS - MORNING**

The music from the previous scene continuing, **ADRIAN** peddles his lime green BMX furiously, maniacally, through the early morning rain: along a quiet suburban street, up on to the curb, along the footpath, into a park, down a steep grass hill, along a snaking cobbled path, across a narrow wooden bridge traversing a stream, on to another footpath, off a curb and finally on to another street.

**INT. SCHOOL BUS - MORNING**

**SAMANTHA** sits beside an Indian girl on a school bus crammed to capacity with teenage girls, all wearing an identical uniform of white shirts, grey skirts and white knee length socks. **SAMANTHA** stares stony faced at the back of the seat in front of her, upon which FUCK U has been, obviously hastily, scrawled. She removes her gaze from this and stares instead out of the window at the depressingly grey morning streets,



drizzle just beginning to fall. She scrunches up her face with evident displeasure.

**EXT. ORKLIN CBD - MORNING**

The music continuing, **MARSHALL'S** car becomes airborne as he takes the crest of a hill at too great a speed. The car makes contact with the road with a considerable thump, followed by a screech of rubber on tar seal. He rapidly turns a corner, enters a car park and parks in the first available space he can find. After hastily cutting the ignition and locking the door, he sprints - literally as fast as his legs will carry him - toward a large, rectangular, ugly-façaded building in the middle distance.

**INT. SCHOOL BUS - MORNING**

The school bus parks outside of **SAMANTHA'S** high school. Virtually all of the students on board immediately crowd towards the two exits with an immense bustle and noise. **SAMANTHA**, her face set in a grimace, waits until almost everyone has departed the bus before she does so herself. Upon approaching a rectangular wooden sign which reads DATRON GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL it transform into DATRON SLUTS' HIGH SCHOOL. A slight smirk crosses Samantha's lips. As she walks through the school - numerous teenagers in uniform continually crossing her path - Outkast's 'We Love These Ho's' plays on the soundtrack. She arrives at a nondescript two storied wooden building, ascends a 180° staircase and arrives in the **SEVENTH FORM COMMON ROOM**. Three of her friends - **JOSIE**, **CLAIRE** and **SARA** - are seated around a battered circular wooden table. **JOSIE**, a redhead, is spooning yogurt from a small plastic pot into her mouth; **CLAIRE**, a brunette, is reading *Macbeth* while listening to her iPod; **SARA**, blonde, is apparently staring out of a nearby window while sporadically sipping from a bottle of water.

**SAMANTHA**

(nonchalantly)

Hey.

**JOSIE**

(cheerfully)

Hey Sam...what did ya get up to in the weekend?

**SAMANTHA**

(while sitting down)

Not much...had ta stay home Saturday night ta finish a stupid geography assignment that's due today.

**JOSIE**

(commiserating)

Gay.

**SAMANTHA**

Yeah...how about you?

**JOSIE**

(automatically)

What?

**SAMANTHA**

What did you do?

**JOSIE**

Not much really...watched some videos at Kristen's place, did some painting...nothing too exciting.

**CLAIRE**

(oblivious to the conversation in progress)

Fuck Shakespeare is gay...why doesn't he just write like normal people...at least then I could understand what the fuck he's tryin' ta say.

**SAMANTHA**

Watch anything good?

**JOSIE**

*Vampire Chronicles* was OK,  
*Swashbucklin' VII* was gay  
as...Kristen's, like, obsessed with those stupid movies.

**SAMANTHA**

Yeah I know...where is Kristen anyway?

**SARA**

(interjecting animatedly)

Prob'ly still getting' dropped off by her mummy. Anyway, I had a fuckin' mean weekend: I went and saw *Romance in Manhattan*, it's got Jennifer Aniston and Orlando Bloom in it he's sooo hot but I hardly saw any of it 'cause I hooked up with this guy

Marcus he's sooo good at kissin' then we went back to his place and got drunk on his parent's Galliano and I got sooo drunk I ended up vomitin'...but I still spent the night at his place...we jist stayed up talkin' to like four in the mornin' it was sooo perfect but I had to leave early on Sunday morning 'cause I had to go do this dumb borin' family shit that I didn't even wanna go to but my stupid fuckin' parents forced me to it was sooo gay...

**SAMANTHA** and **JOSIE** look at each other and smile sardonically.

**EXT. DATRON BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING**

**ADRIAN**, still peddling furiously, cycles his BMX up to the rusted metal bicycle stands at the back of his school and expertly, proficiently, maneuvers the front wheel between two of the cylinders. He saunters past the dilapidated greenhouse attached to the back of the horticulture rooms, then past the mathematics rooms and arrives beside the swimming pool where his two fiends, **CHAD** and **ROBERT**, are standing, smoking roll-your-own cigarettes. **CHAD**, half-Maori, wears white Etnies skate shoes and a backward red Atlanta Braves baseball cap and texts on his cellphone, his thumb fizzing ferociously across the key pad. **ROBERT**, white, wears army fatigue Chucks and a forward New York Jets cap and stares absentmindedly out across the green expanse that constitutes the school's rugby union fields.

**ADRIAN**

(casually)

Sup you two?

**ROBERT**

Hey man, how's it goin'?

**ADRIAN**

Not bad...you?

**ROBERT**

(motioning to his cigarette)

Alright...you wanna durry?

**ADRIAN**

Yeah man...cheers.

**ROBERT** passes **ADRIAN** a pouch of tobacco and a bag of filter tips and **ADRIAN** proceeds to roll a cigarette.

**CHAD**

Hey cuz, how's it? Jist a mo' while I finish this text bro...it's ta Angela.

**ADRIAN**

Who's she?

**ROBERT**

(accompanied by a smirk)

Some bitch he's spadin'.

**CHAD**

(having now completed his text message)

Met her Saturday night at Ricky's  
house aye bro.

**ADRIAN**

What was she doin' there?

**CHAD**

She's a mate a Ricky's missus.

**ADRIAN**

Is she hot?

**CHAD**

(enthusiastically)

Yeah bro...blonde hair, mint-as titties,  
fuckin' fine-as arse.

**ADRIAN**

Yee-ahhh!!!

**ROBERT**

Swe-eeet!!!

**ADRIAN**

Get anywhere with her?

**CHAD**

Hooked up with her out by Ricky's pool...woulda done more but her mates wa gettin' a taxi home aye...oh yeah, and she's white bro.

All three boys erupt into laughter.

**ADRIAN**

Word!!!!

**ROBERT**

Score!!!

**ADRIAN**

(laughing)

Guess that makes a change from your usual skanky-arse hori ho's aye bro.

**CHAD**

Ouw fuck you cunt, at least I can actually get some fuckin' poon motherfucker, unlike you bitch.

**ROBERT**

Burn!!!...hey Aid, you watch *Godfather II* Saturday night?

**ADRIAN**

Oh nah fuck I missed it...saw the first one last Saturday...they're playin' all three over consecutive weekends aye?

**ROBERT**

Yeah man, TV Two at 10:15.

**ADRIAN**

Mean.

**ROBERT**

I forgot how cool number two is...it fuckin' owns when De Niro arrives in New York.

**ADRIAN**

True...ev'ryone always says number two is better but I think I prefer the first one aye...the hit in the rest'rant is the fuckin' shit oi.

**ROBERT**

Yeah man...gay the third one's shit.

**ADRIAN**

Yeah bro...Sofia Coppola's sorta sexy in a 'talian sorta way 'tho'.



**ROBERT**

Yeah...the bitch can't act but she can sure as hell direct...you seen *Lost in Translation*?

**ADRIAN**

Yeah, Bill Murray's the man...didn't like *The Virgin Suicides* much tho'.

The school bell rings. Accompanied by a chorus of "laters" the three boys give each other "bro 'shakes" and depart separately in the direction of their respective locations.

**INT. POLICE BRIEFING ROOM - MORNING**

**MARK**, in uniform, stands at the front of a small room, a whiteboard with various coloured words and sentences scrawled across it, watching while officers haphazardly enter. Once everyone has apparently arrived his gaze remains transfixed upon a young, reasonably attractive blonde-haired woman, **MEGAN**, before he stands up and addresses the occupants of the room.

**MARK**

So...what have the crooks in this city been up to?

**GARY**

Armed robbery occurred at Shell Franktown on Saturday morning at 2:17am. The two offenders were of Maori or Polynesian descent and were carryin' a sawn-off shotgun and a baseball bat. Both were wearin' black

jeans and black sneakers, one wore a black hooded sweatshirt and the other a brown swandri. Neither wore face cov'rings and we have a clear shot of one of them on the shop's 'curity cam'ra...it shouldn't take too long to bring 'em in.

**MARK**

Good...what did they take?

**GARY**

'bout 350 dollars in cash as well as a number of cartons of cigarettes.

**MARK**

OK...what else has occurred?

**PETER**

(after shuffling through an assortment of papers)

A domestic residence...um...number 144a River Road was burgled some time 'tween midnight and 1am this mornin'... 'bout 1500 dollars worth of property was taken, mainly 'lectrical 'pliances.

**MARK**

Any leads?

**PETER**

Not yet boss but we're workin' on it.

**MARK**

What's hap'nin' with those tinny houses on Shakespeare Street and Tennyson Terrace?

**RICHARD**

No word yet but we're keepin' surveillance on 'em so it shouldn't be more than a couple a weeks 'fore we can make another bust...also there's a house containing suspected methamphetamine dealers and possibly a cook in Prominence Summits so it might be worth tryin' to send in an undercover agent.

**MARK**

(a rasping snarl in his voice)

Yeah...let's get the bastards aye.

**INT. UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL - MORNING**

**MARSHALL** sits at the back of an almost-full lecture hall, face down, staring intently at a blank sheet of A4 paper. He looks up, a disconcerted expression on his face, quickly scans around the lecture hall, chews on the end of his pen and looks back down at his paper. He writes something, then hurriedly crosses it out. At the front of the room a wizened lecturer addresses the room.

**LECTURER**

Time people...please put down your pens.

**MARSHALL**

(under his breath)

Jesus fuckin' Christ.

**INT. POLICE CAR - AFTERNOON**

**MARK** is slowly patrolling in his police car through an industrial estate. A call comes through the police radio.

**FEMALE VOICE**

I3, a 5120 is in progress. Two Maori youths, possibly intoxicated, are vandalising a warehouse at number 17 Carmina Crescent. Over.

**MARK** quickly picks up his radio speaker.

**MARK**

10-2. I'm on my way, I'll be there shortly. Over.

**MARK** puts the speaker down and speeds off in the direction of the crime scene.

**INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING**

An infomercial on mute on the television, a Beethoven cello concerto loudly playing on the stereo, **LINDA** is busily tidying the living room: rearranging the cushions upon the armchairs and sofa, piling up the newspapers and magazines on the coffee table, dusting the cabinet which holds decorative displayed plates, antique china teacups, etc. Eventually she collapses back on to one of the armchairs, stares up at the ceiling and closes her eyes, listening to the music.

**INT. POLICE CAR - MORNING**

**MARK** spots the two youths stumbling down the street. When they see the police car they both start running down the street. One of them trips over himself and falls to the footpath. **MARK** immediately pulls his car up to the curb, hops out and grabs the fallen boy. He handcuffs him.

**MARK**

(gruffly)

Stay here.

He then sprints after the other boy, eventually catching up to him and tackling him to the ground. With one hand twisting the boy's arms behind his back and his other hand holding on to the boy's collar, he leads him back down the street in the direction of his friend.

(out of breath)

What's ya name?

**JOSEPH**

Joseph.

**MARK**

Joseph what?

**JOSEPH**

Rawiri.

**MARK**

(to the other boy)

What's your name?

**HEMI**

Hemi Jones.

**MARK**

Well you're both under arrest for  
vandalising that warehouse back there.

**JOSEPH**

But we didn't even do it aye, honest  
officer.

**MARK**

Then why the fuck did you both try to  
run from me then?

**JOSEPH**

Dunno, but we didn't do nothin'.

**MARK**

That's for the court to decide.

**MARK** places both boys in the back seat of the squad car. He moves around to the driver's seat and calls in to the station.

This is I3, both suspects have been apprehended. Over.

**INT. ROUN, ROUN, ROUN & RICO CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS - AFTERNOON**

**MARSHALL**, confined to the cramped space inside a toilet cubicle, removes a tiny amount of a white crystalline substance from a plastic sealable bag with the aid of a halved drinking straw. He places the substance in the bowl of a glass pipe and proceeds to place the flame of a lighter beneath the bowl. Soon little wisps of white smoke are emitted from the crystals. **MARSHALL** inhales, then releases a sizable cloud of smoke into the toilet stall.

**MARSHALL**

(to himself)

Fuck yeah, that's better.

**MARSHALL** places the pipe and bag into his pocket, flushes the toilet for no apparent reason, exits the stall and looks at himself in the mirror.

**MARSHALL**

(staring at his reflection)

Don't be paranoid motherfucker.

**MARSHALL** places his dry hands beneath the automatic dryer and holds them there for a considerable period of time; he jumps away with an agonised shout. He first pushes the door and then corrects his mistake by pulling it open, where he emerges into the main office space of **ROUN, ROUN, ROUN & RICO CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS**. He spots a junior partner, **STEPHEN** standing beside the photocopier holding a Styrofoam cup of coffee. **MARSHALL** attempts to remain inconspicuous but is shortly spotted by **STEPHEN**.

**STEPHEN**

(enthusiastically)

Hey Marshall...how's it goin' man?

**MARSHALL**

(unenthusiastically)

Yeah, alright.

**STEPHEN**

Good good...I've bin tryin' ta get hold of you for the last few days aye. I sent ya a text Saturday night but ya mustn't of got it or somethin'...there any pills around at the mo'?

**MARSHALL**

(evasively)

Umm...nah, not really man.



**STEPHEN**

How about meth'?

**MARSHALL**

Nah, places have bin gettin' busted  
and shit.

**STEPHEN**

(desperately)

Weed?

**MARSHALL**

Pretty dry at the moment man.

**STEPHEN**

(despondently)

Oh, OK.

There is a short, uncomfortable pause while the two men do not  
do or say anything.

**MARSHALL**

(pointing to the photocopier)

Need some help with that?

**STEPHEN**

Nah, I'll have a tutoo with it; it  
should be right in a tick.

**MARSHALL**

Sweet.

**MARSHALL** walks off, leaving **STEPHEN** to tinker with the photocopier.

**INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON**

**LINDA** is in her kitchen, preparing a sandwich for her lunch. Having completed the task, she is about to take a bite when the telephone rings.

**LINDA**

Hello, Linda speaking.

*Pause.*

Well I'm not actually at the shop at the moment Mark, I'm at home.

*Pause.*

I've been to the bank, done the accounts, checked the emails, that sort of thing.

*Pause*

I'm going in there this afternoon.

*Pause*

Well can't you get it yourself?

*Pause*

OK Mark, I'll see what I can do.

**LINDA** slams the telephone down on to the receiver and picks up her sandwich but, before taking a bite, she slams that down as well.

Lazy prick, why can't he buy his own  
bloody beer?

**EXT. SCHOOL FIELD - AFTERNOON**

**ADRIAN** walks across the school field to where **CHAD**, **ROBERT** and another boy, **RICO**, are waiting. Once **ADRIAN** arrives at their circle the four boys begin walking across the field.

**ADRIAN**

Hey.

**CHAD**

(indicating **RICO**)

Hey bro, this is Rico.

**ADRIAN**

How's it man?

**RICO**

'Sup bro?

**ADRIAN**

Yo Chad, got any buds bro?

**CHAD**

Yeah man, fuckin' skunky shit as well.

**ADRIAN**

True? Where'd ya get it?

**CHAD**

Ma old man bought an ounce off some  
dude...dunno who.

**ADRIAN**

Ya reckon he could flip a bag my way?

**CHAD**

Yeah bro', sweet as aye.

**ADRIAN**

Mean. I finished off the last of my  
shit Saturday night.

**CHAD**

(boastfully)

I was too busy gettin' poon' Saturday  
night ta have a smoke aye.

**ROBERT**

I thought you said you only hooked up  
with that chick?

**CHAD** does not respond. Instead, having arrived at his black Mazda 323, he unlocks the driver's side door, enters the car and unlocks the other three doors manually. The other three boys enter the car: **ADRIAN** on the front passenger's seat, **ROBERT** behind him and **RICO** behind **CHAD**.

**CHAD**

(to **ADRIAN**)

Grab the pipe bro'.

While **ADRIAN** removes a small marijuana pipe from the glove box **CHAD** pushes a cassette into the cassette player: Cypress Hill's song 'Stoned is the Way of the Walk' starts playing. After **ADRIAN** passes him the pipe **CHAD** commences filling it with marijuana from a bag procured from his pocket. After taking a toke **CHAD** passes the instrument to **ADRIAN** who takes a toke before passing it to **ROBERT**; the device is passed around in a semi-circle while the four boys chat.

Fuckin' Robbocock pinged me for havin'  
a ciggy after school last Friday so  
I've got a fuckin' detention after  
school today.

**ADRIAN**

Gay.

**CHAD**

Yeah. Fuck knows how they can punish you for doin' shit after school aye.

**ROBERT**

It shouldn't be any of their bloody business what we do or do not do outside of school hours. Nazis.

**RICO**

You should fuckin' waste that cunt aye bro'.

**CHAD**

(increasingly enthusiastically)

Yeah man, I should castrate the cunt and then drive a stake up into his abdominal area. Then I could slice off his fingers, toes, ears, nose and lips, gouge out his eyes and finish him off by opening his chest to remove his heart.

**ROBERT**

Well I'm no doctor but I think he would have already died before you reached the end of that list of terrors. You should make an incision in his stomach, insert a tube and pump water into him until he suffers a

brain aneurysm caused by excessive hydration.

**ADRIAN**

Nah, ya should slice off his skin, wrap the exposed areas in barbed wire, send electrical current through it, dismember him and finish him off by dousing him in petrol and setting him alight.

**RICO**

Nah bro', jist fuckin' take ta him with a baseball bat aye.

**CHAD**

Haha, word! Yo niggas finished with that pipe.

**RICO**

(exhaling lungfuls of smoke)

Yeah bro', cheers.

**RICO** passes **CHAD** the pipe; **CHAD** passes it to **ADRIAN** who places it back inside the glove compartment. The four boys emerge from the car, smoke visibly escaping its confines. As they trudge back across the field to school Cypress Hill's 'Stoned is the Way of the Walk' plays on the soundtrack.

**EXT. URBAN STREET - AFTERNOON**

**LINDA** parks her Jeep Cherokee, exits the vehicle, pushes the little button to lock it with a "beep", checks the handle to make sure it is locked and walks across the street to her business, the **BUXOM BOUTIQUE**. Upon entering the business the shop's assistant, **JANICE**, rushes up to **LINDA** in an obvious panic.

**JANICE**

Linda, thank god ya here...where 'ave ya been?

**LINDA**

I've been to the bank and then talked to one of the suppliers. Why, what's wrong?

**JANICE**

This woman ses she ordered a size 18 Winchester spilt-side dress in Autumnberry last Thursday but I can't find it anywhere and there's no record of it either.

**LINDA**

Where is this woman?

**JANICE**

Over there.

**JANICE** points to a large woman in her early-to-mid forties inspecting a rack of negligees. She is dressed inappropriately for her size and age: she wears a white semi-transparent



halter-neck top revealing pink brassiere straps, tight white three-quarter length pants and cork-soled heels. **LINDA** approaches her.

**LINDA**

Hi there madam, may I help you?

**WOMAN**

Yes, your assistant there ordered a size 18 Winchester split-side dress in Autumnberry for me las' Thursday and now she's tryin' ta tell me that it isn't here. I mean, what kinda shoddy bloody customer service is that? I've gotta wedding ta go to this weekend and I was gonna wear that dress.

**LINDA**

I'm extremely sorry about that madam, I'll make sure I order another one straight away so it should be here by Friday at the latest. In the meantime, may I offer you forty dollars worth of gift vouchers?

**WOMAN**

Well I 'spose that will have ta do in the meantime, won't it? I have ta say, I'm not happy 'bout this at all, not one bit.

**LINDA**

Once again I'm very sorry about this madam. Let me assure you that you

will get your dress by this Friday.  
If you'd just like to follow me to  
the counter I'll write out those gift  
vouchers for you.

The **WOMAN** follows **LINDA** to the counter, where she dates and  
signs two twenty dollar gift certificates. The **WOMAN** departs  
the store. **LINDA** turns to **JANICE**.

Why didn't you order the dress for  
that woman?

**JANICE**

I must have...I'm sure I did...

**LINDA**

Then how come there wasn't any record  
of it?

**JANICE**

I can't even remember that woman  
comin' in las' We'nesday.

**LINDA**

It was last Thursday Janice and  
that's exactly your problem right  
there: you never remember the  
customers.

**JANICE**

I'm sorry Linda, really I am, it's  
jist I've got so much on my plate at

the moment: my mum's not well and  
Greg and I are in the process of  
tryin' ta sell our home and  
Jonathan's not doin' well in school..

**LINDA**

I understand Janice, I honestly do,  
but ya can't keep on stuffin' up like  
this, OK? Ya need ta buck up ya ideas  
and quick smart about it, ya  
understand?

**JANICE**

Yes Linda, I'll try harder.

**LINDA**

Good, that's all I wanted ta hear...  
now go and unpack that new box of  
Tummy Tuckers and put them out on the  
shelf.

**JANICE**

Sure Linda.

**LINDA**

(under her breath)

Jesus Christ, four more hours of this  
shit.

**INT. DATRON GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON**

**SAMANTHA** sits at a desk alongside a window in a geography class at her school. At an adjoining desk sits a girl with wild, frizzy orange hair: **RACHEL LIFTON**. Upon the classroom walls are various maps, students' projects, posters, et cetera. At the front of the room, before an expansive blackboard stained green from age and incessant chalk application, stands the **TEACHER**, a textbook in her hand. She is reading something out to the class.

**TEACHER**

So if we compare the rates of erosion between the east and west coasts of the North Island we can clearly see the variables which exist between the currents of the Tasman Sea and the Pacific Ocean.

**RACHEL** leans over to **SAMANTHA**.

**RACHEL**

Oi Sam, what sea is on what side?

**SAMANTHA**

Tasman's in the west, Pacific's in the east.

**RACHEL**

(pointing to the corresponding directions with her hand)

Never...Eat...Soggy...Weetbix.

**SAMANTHA** rolls her eyes.

**TEACHER**

Now class, you have twenty five minutes to do any last minute work required to complete your assignments.

The majority of the class, including **SAMANTHA**, commences reading through their assignments. **RACHEL** leans over toward **SAMANTHA' S** desk.

**RACHEL**

Psss, Sam, what do farmer's use as, like, an extra paddock?

**SAMANTHA**

Run-off...(under her breath)...I wish you would run off back ta whatever Hicksville town ya came from in the first place.

**SAMANTHA** resumes reading through her assignment.

**RACHEL**

Psss, Sam, did ya watch Buffy on Saturday night?

**SAMANTHA**

No...(under her breath)... I would rather slay you than answer your stupid questions.

Once more **SAMANTHA** attempts to focus upon her assignment.

**RACHEL**

Oi, Sam, what's this word 'ere?

**RACHEL** passes a sheet of paper across to **SAMANTHA**.

**SAMANTHA**

Cow...(under her breath)...you cow.

**SAMANTHA** looks out the window, a pained expression on her face, at the grey, overcast winter sky.

**EXT. URBAN STREET - AFTERNOON**

**MARK** pulls his car up to a curb, turns it off and emerges from the vehicle. As he saunters into **NIX TRIX ADULT SPECIALITY STORE** the Sublime song 'Pawn Shop' plays on the soundtrack. The **PROPRIETOR** of the store is an unkempt, disheveled middle-aged man in possession of a scraggly grey, ginger and brown beard and a t-shirt covered in food stains. **MARK** walks around the store, eventually stopping before a display of plastic blow-up sex dolls. After perusing the varied selection he grabs a blonde-haired model, then moves over to a magazine rack. He grabs copies of *Big Boobed Babes* and *Lesbian Lust* and takes his purchases to the counter.

**MARK**

I'll jist grab these thanks mate.

**PROPRIETOR**

\$48.75.

**MARK** hands over several banknotes. The **PROPRIETOR** hands him back his change.

**MARK**

Any chance I could get that doll  
gift wrapped?

**PROPRIETOR**

Sorry mate, don't 'ave that  
facility.

**MARK** picks up his purchases from off the counter and starts walking out of the store.

**INT. CHAD'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON**

**ADRIAN**, **CHAD** and **ROBERT** are smoking marijuana through a bucket bong placed upon the floor: **ADRIAN** and **CHAD** are seated upon the bed while **ROBERT** is in an old, tatty armchair. GZA's '5<sup>th</sup> Chamber' is playing on the stereo while the Shaw Brother's kung-fu film *The 36<sup>th</sup> Chamber of Shaolin* is playing on mute on the television. **CHAD** fills the transparent plastic Coca-Cola bottle up with smoke and pushes it down into the bucket half-full of water, emptying the marijuana smoke into his lungs. He exhales the smoke and coughs once.

**CHAD**

(to **ADRIAN**)

Wrote a rhyme today bro.

**ADRIAN**

True...any good?

**CHAD**

Yeah bro', it's fuckin' raw as  
aye...wan' me ta bust it bro'?

**ADRIAN**

Yeah, sweet cuz.

**CHAD**

Roun' here bros don't get capped or  
whacked / they get jumped by  
Westsidiers wieldin' baseball bats /  
steal ya wallet watch and weed /  
down that dodgy fuckin' alley off  
Worley Place / seven kicks to the  
body / five hits to the face /  
motherfuckers don't do diamond  
heists for ice / ice is that white  
shit ya smoke in glass pipes / that  
shit all of N Zs s'pose' to be  
hooked on / me?...jist gimme a fiddy  
bag and a bong / bitch pack that  
shit so I can get a rush on / else  
roll up a joint and make sure its  
long / 'cause I wanna forget all  
that shit that I've done / I don't  
wanna fight, I jist wanna have fun /  
but it's so fuckin' hard when cunts  
don't wanna chill / bro smoke a  
cone, scull a beer, bomb a fuckin'  
pill / do anything as long as ya  
leave me alone / I jist wanna find  
me a bitch I can bone / 'cause  
poon', weed and hip-hop's the only  
shit that I care for / it's the only  
shit you can get when ya poor / no



car, no job, no motherfuckin' money  
/ but I know I can pull me a primo-  
as honey / score me some buds and  
put Enter the Wu on / fuck her all  
night / bitch put that track back  
on! / time for the motherfuckin'  
hook right now yo / I jist wanna get  
high / smoke weed to the day that I  
die / find me a bitch who's so  
fuckin' fly / fuck her to the day  
that I die / make hip-hop ev'ry  
nigga's gunna buy / keep on spittin'  
to the day that I die / for when the  
time for me to die comes by / ev'ry  
bro' and sis' who loves hip-hop's  
gunna cry / to see such a talent fly  
by / to that palace called heaven in  
the sky.

**ADRIAN**

Fuck yeah bro', that was mean.

**CHAD**

Chur cuz...

The two boys give one another a handshake.

...what you think Robdog?

**ROBERT**

Ummm...like...you own a car.

**CHAD**

Yeah, well, like, I didn't used to  
aye.

**INT. SUPERMARKET - AFTERNOON**

**SAMANTHA** is at her job at a supermarket, slowly and despondently pushing groceries along the conveyer belt and loading them into a trolley. She looks over at one of the other supermarket employees, **GREGORY**, who is roughly her own age.

**INT. BAR - NIGHT**

**SAMANTHA** is in a crowded, brightly lit bar full of people laughing and talking loudly in pompous, inebriated voices. The men all wear khaki corduroy clothing and berets while the women are in scarlet dresses and high-heels and smoke cigarettes in long cream coloured holders. **SAMANTHA** and **GREGORY** are standing at the bar waiting for the bartender to make the drinks they have ordered. The bartender finishes serving the drinks, **GREGORY** pays for them and he and **SAMANTHA** take them over to the table where they sit down beside four other people - two men and two women. **SAMANTHA** looks up and across the table at **GREGORY**; he takes a sip of his drink, puts it down on the table and looks across at **SAMANTHA**. He smiles. **SAMANTHA** smiles back, but awkwardly. Neither of them say anything. **GREGORY** stands up, pushes his chair toward the table and walks off into the crowd. **SAMANTHA** stands up, pushes her chair toward the table and walks quickly, almost frantically in the direction of the toilets. She arrives at a white swing-door with **GENTS** stenciled in black across it, pushes it open and moves through the entrance. The Vera Lynn song 'We'll Meet Again' is playing softly over a sound system. She rounds a corner to see **GREGORY** standing at a urinal. She walks up to him, so that her head is just behind his left shoulder. He turns around. He stares intently at her, then slowly brings his face closer to hers. Samantha in turn brings her face up closer to his. Their lips meet. Gregory pushes his mouth

against hers harder, pushes against her breasts, her hips. He puts his tongue in her mouth. Samantha reciprocates by putting her tongue in his mouth, grinding her breasts and her pelvis against him.

**INT. SUPERMARKET - AFTERNOON**

**SAMANTHA** is ripped from her reverie when **CHARLENE**, her rotund middle-aged supervisor, approaches her.

**CHARLENE**

You able to work this Sunday Sam?

**SAMANTHA**

Ummm...

**CHARLENE**

You're able to work aye? It's stocktake time so we need all the people we can get.

**SAMANTHA**

Well...

**CHARLENE**

It's not a problem is it Samantha?

**SAMANTHA**

I guess not.

**CHARLENE**

Great, thanks.

**CHARLENE** waddles off.

**SAMANTHA**

(under her breath)

Bloody hell, I don't wanna work on a  
fucking Sunday.

**INT. FAMILY'S HOUSE - EVENING**

**ADRIAN** cautiously, carefully, opens the front door to his house, looks inside and quietly closes it. His eyes are streaked with jagged red lines from the marijuana he has been smoking with his friends. He walks along the hallway, up the staircase and along the corridor to his bedroom. Upon closing his bedroom door he removes a bag of marijuana from his trouser pocket and places it at the back of a drawer. He then removes his sweatshirt, sprays it liberally with deodorant and throws it beneath his bed. He then moves across to his stereo and puts on Nirvana's 'MTV Unplugged in New York' album, skipping tracks to 'Lake of Fire'. He sits on his bed and rolls a cigarette, mouthing in time to the music. After finishing this task he opens his bedroom window, lights the cigarette and takes a long drag, exhaling the smoke out across his property to the neighbour's where, through their living room window, he watches their television flicker away in the late evening dusk.

**INT. ADRIAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

As with the first scene of the screenplay, **ADRIAN** stares up at his bedroom ceiling through the darkness.

**ADRIAN**

(voice-over)

When you sleep ya body repairs itself: the cells recharge similar to a battery so as to keep the extremely sophisticated yet essentially simplistic machine that we call our body in workin' order - keep it runnin' in other words. But when we don't sleep it doesn't have a chance to do this and instead the cells simply degenerate and are not replaced or repaired in any way but die off one by one in an amazingly quick succession of physical and mental deterioration. This is alright if periods of sleeplessness occur only sporadically or infrequently, but if the body is continually subjected to a lack of sleep the cells have no chance to grow and this cell death is manifested through physical and mental symptoms: an almost complete lack of physical energy replicated by a chronic mental fatigue; distorted sense perception, especially visual and aural hallucinations; memory loss and an impaired ability to form new memories; an increased susceptibility to physical aches and pains and sicknesses, including lingering coughs and colds; however, what is undoubtedly the worst such effect - worse than no energy and fucked-up senses and a fucked-up memory and a

fucked-up immune system - the worst effect of them all is the gradually increasing and exponentially worsening depression that befalls the insomniac as more and more brain cells die without being replaced and more and more the sufferer must acclimatise themselves to living in a perpetual dreamworld. The line between sleep and consciousness is invariably and unavoidably blurred so that eventually it feels as though all of existence is nothing more than an eternal twilight zone. All sense of control and responsibility for oneself dissipates and, as this continues over time, what was once a living dreamworld slowly and surely transforms itself into a waking nightmare of insane and degrading magnitude.

**FADE TO BLACK.**

## **Chapter Ten: Screenplay Self-Analysis.**

There are two primary reasons for adapting part of the novel fragment, *Eleven A' Bier Place*, I had written previous to commencing this thesis into a screenplay format: one practical, one theoretical. Firstly, in a practical sense I wanted to utilise the skills and techniques I had encountered while reading, studying and watching the films and screenplays I mentioned during this thesis: skills such as constructing cinematic characterisations, converting literary dialogue into cinematic dialogue, depicting a *mise en scène*, and so forth. Secondly, a theoretical reason exists in that I believed writing part of a screenplay would assist me in understanding how screenwriters set about the task of adapting a novel or other source into a script, and could also provide an insight into the challenges, dilemmas, problems and possibilities which makes the adaptive process such an interesting area of study.

The initial, and what remains during the screenwriting process one of the most fundamental, challenges is how to convert the language of the prose narrative into the language of the screenplay. In this case dialogue isn't much of a problem, although in some instances long sections or speeches of dialogue in the novel may have to be amended or partially excised for the purpose of brevity, in order to keep the action succinct and exciting, or else the dialogue may have to be drawn out, i.e., expanded or lengthened, in order to construct a complete "dialogue scene." However, a much more pressing concern is making sure that scene directions convey the necessary information in as brief a fashion as possible.

When writing literary prose the author may choose when to and when not to convey information which appeals directly to the senses; the screenwriter, on the other hand, must perform this duty at all times. This compels the adaptor to imagine and create sensory data regarding a scene where this information does not necessarily exist in the source text. This can often be a fascinating, yet at times frustrating, task. Part of the problem lies in ascertaining what *kind* of information to both include, and omit, from any given scene direction. There may exist a fine line between not including an important facet of a scene, and not providing enough information by which to impress upon the reader's mind the look and feel of a scene. Likewise, there is a delicate balance to be reached between using nouns to provide concrete, objective information about a scene, and adjectives, adverbs and verbs by which to describe it. Essentially, nouns form the basis of the scene description as it is this information which is most necessary for the prospective director or producer to understand

the most basic elements of any given scene. However, adjectives, adverbs and verbs provide interest to a scene and convey impressionistic information which “colours” a scene in the mind’s eye. By way of example, here is the opening scene direction from *Eleven A’Bier Place*:

All is deathly still and quiet. Through the early morning darkness we can just make out the face of a teenage boy, **ADRIAN**, whose head provides a faint contrast to the white pillow upon which it rests. His eyes are open, apparently staring at the ceiling. The illuminated red display on his bedside alarm clock reads 4:07. After a short time Adrian’s voice – intelligent but colloquial - emanates in voice-over from the darkness.

The various noun groups – “morning darkness,” “white pillow,” “alarm clock” – provide the concrete, objective elements of the scene – in other words, the necessary props and basic elements of the *mise en scène*. Meanwhile the adjectival, adverbial and verbal groups – “deathly still and quiet,” “faint contrast,” “intelligent but colloquial” – provide the sort of subjective information which is required to construct a readable narrative and allow the actors, director, producer, etc. to imagine how the scene looks, sounds, etc. Without these adjectival, adverbial and verbal phrases a screenplay would be little more than a shopping list provided for the benefit of the producer.

Without doubt one of the most important aspects of adaptation is characterisation. Generally the first step is deciding which characters from the original text to include in the adaptation, and which characters to omit. Generally, most, if not all, of the major characters will be included, for they fulfil an important role in the narrative, which if omitted would cause serious problems in the plot. It is often much more difficult to decide which minor characters to include and omit from the screenplay. The tendency is generally to omit a minor character, unless he or she fulfils an important narrative task. However, sometimes a minor character may be included on the basis that they are appealing, and thus provide interest or humour value to the screenplay. In saying this though, it is not necessarily always feasible, because either the standard length of a feature film (generally between ninety minutes and two hours running time) does not permit this, or because the narrative would become too unwieldy and difficult to follow with the inclusion of unnecessary characters. The rule of



thumb is to only include those characters who are absolutely necessary for the advancement of the screenplay's plot. For example, in my partial adaptation of *Eleven A'Bier Place* I have not included Marshall's co-worker Marissa, nor Adrian's classmates Sam and Theodore, or the bullies Paul and Fenster, for otherwise the *dramatis personae* would as a result of their inclusion become far too cluttered. Meanwhile, some other minor characters had to be included on the basis that they fulfil a necessary narrative function.

After deciding which characters to include and omit from an adaptive screenplay, the next step is deciding upon the various facets of their personalities. The initial step (other than perhaps such basic information about them as their age, distinguishing physical characteristics, their jobs, etc.) is in determining how they communicate. By this I mean both their manner of speech and the sorts of things they would or would not say. As an example I will use a section of dialogue between Linda and Samantha from early in the screenplay:

**LINDA**

(obviously dissatisfied)

It's still not good enough Sam.

**SAMANTHA**

(petulantly)

Why not?

**LINDA**

Because ya intonation is way off...  
remember, it's gotta be perfect if  
we've got any chance whatsoever of  
winnin' the North Island Champs.

**SAMANTHA**

(under her breath)

Who gives a shit?

**LINDA**

What did you say?

**SAMANTHA**

Nothin'.

**LINDA**

Now jist practice it once more before  
ya go off ta school.

**SAMANTHA**

Oh for fuck's sake.

**LINDA**

(authoritatively)

Hurry up missy, I haven't got all  
day...I've gotta get ta work too ya  
know.

**SAMANTHA**

(frustrated)

Yeah, yeah, whatever.

In this scene I attempted to capture the tension between the mother and daughter. It commences with Linda giving her daughter Samantha an instruction in an authoritative, “motherly” tone: what could be called constructive criticism. Samantha replies ‘Why not?’ in a petulant manner, characteristic of an annoyed teenager. It is often necessary to provide additional scene directions beneath the character’s name, so as to indicate how the character has spoken. Oftentimes the character’s dialogue on its own does not necessarily indicate how they have spoken it. Then again, dialogue will also not require any additional emphasis, such

as Samantha's 'Oh for fuck's sake': her meaning and tone of voice is evident from what she says.

As well as dialogue, voice-overs are often an intrinsic element of screenplays. Adrian's opening voice-over of the screenplay may be used as a case in point:

**ADRIAN**

(voice-over)

Have ya evah lay awake at four in the mornin', unable to get ta sleep? All ya wanna do is fall unconscious - ya body exhausted, ya mind screamin' out in desperate agony with the knowledge that in less than four hours ya gonna have ta get up and do the same inane, depressin' shit ya did yesterday, and the day before that, and the thousands of days made up of tens a thousands of hours before that – but the harder ya try to sleep the more awake ya are. Ya lie in a pool of sweat: the result of ya own nervous, frustrated energy as the ceilin' stares down at you, invisible but ever-present in the all-consumin' darkness, tauntin' ya inability to achieve this most basic a human functions. Meanwhile ya dwell 'pon the nature of insomnia: that menacin' nocturnal presence, that phantasm that insists on keepin' ya black ringed, heavy lidded eyes open and screamin' the thoughts that race about ya brain.

The most obvious feature of this voice-over is that I have attempted to capture Adrian's intonation and speech patterns: 'intelligent but colloquial' as I write in the scene direction. For the most part this consists in substituting 'ya' for 'you' and in leaving off the final letter in words with an '-ing' ending. Yet just because Adrian has a pronounced New Zealand accent does not inherently mean that he is not insightful or educated, as I have attempted to communicate by his use of terms such as 'inane' and 'phantasm'. Additionally I thought it

was effective to begin this voice-over – the first words of the screenplay – with a rhetorical question, as it immediately involves the reader in the narrative. I also attempted to create a sense of the voice-over ascending to the final phrase ‘screamin’ the thoughts that race about ya brain’, which I fancy possesses a slightly horrific-sounding aspect to it. Likewise, I have attempted to do the same thing with Adrian’s voice-over which concludes this screenplay:

**ADRIAN**

(voice-over)

When you sleep ya body repairs itself: the cells recharge similar to a battery so as to keep the extremely sophisticated yet essentially simplistic machine that we call our body in workin’ order - keep it runnin’ in other words. But when we don’t sleep it doesn’t have a chance to do this and instead the cells simply degenerate and are not replaced or repaired in any way but die off one by one in an amazingly quick succession of physical and mental deterioration. This is alright if periods of sleeplessness occur only sporadically or infrequently, but if the body is continually subjected to a lack of sleep the cells have no chance to grow and this cell death is manifested through physical and mental symptoms: an almost complete lack of physical energy replicated by a chronic mental fatigue; distorted sense perception, especially visual and aural hallucinations; memory loss and an impaired ability to form new memories; an increased susceptibility to physical aches and pains and sicknesses, including lingering coughs and colds; however, what is undoubtedly the worst such effect - worse than no energy and fucked-up senses and a fucked-up memory and a fucked-up immune system - the worst effect of them all is the gradually increasing and exponentially worsening depression that befalls the

insomniac as more and more brain cells die without being replaced and more and more the sufferer must acclimatise themselves to living in a perpetual dreamworld. The line between sleep and consciousness is invariably and unavoidably blurred so that eventually it feels as though all of existence is nothing more than an eternal twilight zone. All sense of control and responsibility for oneself dissipates and, as this continues over time, what was once a living dreamworld slowly and surely transforms itself into a waking nightmare of insane and degrading magnitude.

In this voice-over I have also tried to create an ascension which builds up to the phrase ‘a waking nightmare of insane and degrading magnitude’ which concludes the screenplay. In this way the voice-over switches from the pseudo-scientific explanation of the importance of sleep to a quasi-tragic meditation upon the horrors subjected by the individual – in this case Adrian – who cannot sleep. As with Adrian’s voice-over which commenced the screenplay, I have juxtaposed educated speech – primarily indicated by the use of terms such as ‘degenerate’, ‘deterioration’, ‘sporadically’ and ‘susceptibility’ – with a liberal sprinkling of expletives. By this means I have attempted to impart to the reader the idea that, while Adrian is at least reasonably intelligent, he is also very much a product of his less-than-perfect environment.

Structure is also another important consideration in regards to the adaptive process, for the structure of a literary narrative – be it a novel, novella, or short story - will not necessarily be ideal for a screenplay. In essence, an adaptor must work with the *narrative* of his source text, rather than the *plot*. For the most part the scenes as they appear in my adaptive screenplay are similarly arranged to where they appear in the novel fragment, although there is a notable exception. This is when Mark arrests the two young boys for vandalism, which in the novel fragment appears significantly after the other events in the screenplay. I included this on the basis that I think it is an interesting scene which possesses a significant visual appeal. By this I mean that a cop chasing two young hoodlums through the streets often will engage the viewer’s attention and prove exciting: this idea is supported by

the abundance, even plethora, of crime films and television shows which are popular with audiences. I believe that the manner in which I inserted it into the action is effective as it does not impinge upon the structural unity which exists. This is of course the important consideration in regard to structure in an adaptive screenplay, for it goes without saying that you cannot simply insert scenes which distract from the narrative flow of the story.

However, there were aspects and parts of the novel fragment which I would have liked to have included in the screenplay but was unable to. This can be the case for a variety of reasons. For example, there is this passage when Marshall is driving to university:

Time: 9:02. ETA: 9:08. It will be hit-or-miss whether he'll be allowed in, hence the reason why the driving antics of the Dukes of Hazzard are being displayed on cramped inner-city streets by a sleep deprived male just out of his teens, his selected choice of hard house track played at a moderately loud volume so that it's unerringly consistent bass is just audible to the foot & vehicular traffic that surrounds him: the office and retail employees at the start of their working day, the mothers returning from taking their kids to school, perhaps anticipating a day of shopping with their husband's credit cards - groceries, a few magazines (Women's Day, Cleo or Cosmopolitan thrown into the trolley) then break for morning tea at a café (espresso and a bagel probably) before maybe splashing out on a new pair of shoes, or that lovely halter-neck top she spied in a shop window in Parnell last Thursday, or the new Julio Iglesias CD she'd been meaning to buy for weeks &...

While I include Marshall driving his car at breakneck speed accompanied by loud hard house music, I could not include the latter part of this passage. One reason is that it is essentially part of Marshall's thought process, but even if I were to include such information in the screenplay it would distract from the narrative. It is clearly a passage which works better in prose text than in a screenplay, and it is this distinction which the adaptive screenwriter must be mindful of.

A similar example is the following, also involving Marshall:

...an hour of work left, the methamphetamine has worn off & all Marshall wants to do is get home in time to have a session while watching *The Simpsons*. However, towering between him & cannabis-enveloped, parodic-animated bliss is a pile of folders that curiously looks taller every time he removes one from off of its lofty summit. It being an almost literally mindless task, Marshall has ample opportunity to think, his thoughts all centered around similar topics: *fuck I wanna 'nother ciggy, fuck I wanna 'nother coffee & fuck I wanna get home in time to have a sesh & watch The Simpsons*. A sense of lethargy created by the comedown hangs over Marshall, intensifying his Sisyphean mission, yet the seven cups of amply sugared coffee & five Marlboro Menthols he's had since lunch provide him with a sort of distorted energy, a certain hyperactive streak like when he ate too many chocolates & drank too many Cokes at birthday parties when he was young, a hyperactivity that reveals itself in the quick jolted movements that he makes from his chair to the filing cabinet & the song he heard on the office radio that won't exit his head however hard he tries so that 'Oops I did it again...I gave you my heart...da da de da daa' forms an agonising refrain playing on repeat in a constant cycle through his brain, a dismally cheery soundtrack to the excruciating, agonisingly boring task at hand which consists of the following unerring steps: 1 (One) – Open folder & locate appropriate name, often inconspicuously & almost always unintelligibly scrawled in red ink somewhere along the page's bottom margin. 2 (Two) – Locate horizontal file corresponding with name in folder. 3 (Three) – Place folder in correct alphabetical position *or as close to it as ya can be fucked 'cause they're all out of order anyway 'cause of the stupid motherfuckers who never put them in order & then get me to fix them up...I bet I'll be dreamin' 'bout this shit tonight...& the feelin' of doin' it will stay in my hand hours after I've finished*. He makes a pathetic sight: seated on an ergonomic chair in the middle of the corridor, wedged between the filing cabinets and the opposing wall with an almost imperceptibly swaying pile of folders balanced precariously on his lap, thinking about finally finishing this damn task & leaving this fucking building & driving home & smoking a cone & watching *The Simpsons* & basically chilling the fuck out - until Marissa walks into the corridor. Marissa is twenty-five, legal secretary of Roun Roun Roun & Rigo Barristers & Solicitors & object of sexual attraction & longing of Marshall's for the just-under-two-&-a-half-years that he has been working there.

This passage consists of a number of elements which I do not believe would be successful in a screenplay. Perhaps the most important of these is that much of the passage is concerned

with Marshall's thought process. Of course, a character's thought process can be communicated in a screenplay, and thus in a film, in one of two ways: either through a voice-over, or by a character's monologue. However, it is not always feasible to use these techniques. Ideally voice-overs should be used sparingly, as a film should primarily convey information through visual means. If it is unable to do this, then a strong argument can be made that the narrative is better suited for presentation through prose. Monologues should also be used sparingly, particularly in realistic cinema, for it is not often that people say things to themselves at any great length if they are not mentally ill. Of course, it is fine for a character to exclaim something to themselves such as 'Oh my!' or 'Whoops!' or something of that nature, but if characters were to talk to themselves in sentences and paragraphs it would be highly unusual indeed.

In regards to the above paragraph, it would also be difficult to convey the fact that Marshall is simultaneously experiencing both lethargy and hyperactivity. Needless to say, it would require an actor of immense ability to perform this feat. Likewise, it would take a phenomenally talented thespian to make the act of filing papers seem interesting on screen. This illustrates the fact that what can be of interest on the printed page does not necessarily possess any interest value on a cinema screen. This is because a film, through a screenplay, must consist of scenes which consist of some intrinsic visual interest. However, a passage in prose does not necessarily have to possess *visual* interest: this interest may be intellectual, or verbal – in other words, *literary*. When all is said and done, this constitutes the fundamental difference between the language of the screenplay and the language of prose. The language of the screenplay essentially must *always* possess some form of visual interest value, while this is not necessary at all times with prose, as there are other forms of interest value which a novel, novella or short story may consist of.

I think I have now mentioned the major considerations of the adaptive screenwriter: considerations such as characterisation, dialogue, the differences between the language of the prose text and the language of the screenplay, scene descriptions, structure, voice-overs and constituent elements of the *mise en scène*. Certainly this is not an exhaustive list, but these were the major challenges I encountered when converting the novel fragment *Eleven A'Bier Place* into a screenplay. Whether I was at all successful or not is not for me to say, but I do believe I chose the correct passages to include in a screenplay: those which possessed a significant amount of visual potential. It is this, after all, which determines whether a screenplay is compelling or not. If cinematic-like images are not formed in the reader's mind,



then the screenplay simply remains words on a page. However – unlike a prose text which relies to a great extent upon the imaginations of the individual readers in order to construct visual images within the mind's eye – a screenplay must in essence achieve this task for the reader. If a screenplay does not clearly construct a concrete visual world for its readers then an actor would have a radically different idea of the prospective film to the director, whose idea of the film would differ radically to the producer's, and so on. If this was always the case then chances are very few films would ever get made as no one would agree on how a film should look and sound. Therefore, the impetus is on the screenwriter to write a script which clearly details the important elements of a narrative, while still making it interesting to read.

## **Chapter Eleven: Conclusion**

Adaptation...is a presence that is woven into the very fabric of film culture. To engage with cinema is to ponder adaptation. Yet it represents such a dark and enigmatic thread that it has elicited disparate and sometimes diametric opinions. Even among those who champion faithful adaptations, there is no clear formula concerning how generally to implement the procedure, or afterwards how to evaluate the procedure's success or failure. Since every adaptive situation is unique – as is every adaptor – no such formula is likely to be devised. In sum, adaptation looms as an issue that may and ought to be addressed, probed, weighed, and considered. But, thoroughgoing problem that it is, it can never be fully resolved.<sup>261</sup>

This statement contains a great deal of truth. Oftentimes there exists a relatively fine line between making a transpositional adaptation which is too overtly faithful to the original text and thus is unimaginative, staid and boring, and an analogous adaptation which devotees of the novel feels betrays the spirit and intent of the original text. This is evident by examining the varied reactions to either the original novels or the subsequent films which I have studied in this thesis. Anthony Burgess, as well as many filmgoers, considered Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* an extremely adept and intellectually challenging piece of cinema; many others despised it as abhorrently violent and ill-natured, to the extent that Kubrick himself personally requested that the film not be screened in England due to the immense public and professional outcry it received. Terry Gilliam's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* is revered by an extraordinarily large number of people, to the extent that it has been conferred an almost instantaneous cult status; however, many critics considered it repellent and disgusting, such as Leonard Maltin who described it as an 'Excruciating adaptation of Hunter S. Thompson's 1971 book, which defined the counterculture of its day. The film, however, is simply one monotonous, painfully long drug trip – replete with close-ups of vomit...' <sup>262</sup> Equally, many people considered Kubrick's *The Shining* to be one of the greatest horror films ever made, while Stephen King thought it to be ridiculous and entirely missing the point of the original story.

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<sup>261</sup> Jenkins, Greg, *Stanley Kubrick and the Art of Adaptation: Three Novels, Three Films* McFarland, Jefferson (NC), 1997 p.8

<sup>262</sup> Maltin, Leonard *et al* (eds.), *Leonard Maltin's 2007 Movie Guide* Penguin, New York, 2006 (1969) p.427

So too is this the case with the novels. Some critics understood Bret Easton Ellis' intention with *American Psycho*, such as Fay Weldon who described it as, '...a beautifully controlled, careful, important novel'<sup>263</sup>; others, such as Roger Rosenblatt of the *New York Times*, urged readers to 'snuff this book!'<sup>264</sup> while the National Organization of Women (NOW) called for a boycott of its intended publisher Simon & Schuster, resulting in Random House publishing it instead. Likewise with Bernard Malamud's *The Fixer*: 'Although the novel received both the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize in 1967, it had something of a mixed reception by critics who, however impressed they were by its literary merit, were often perplexed by its status as a historical novel...' <sup>265</sup> Critics – Martin Amis being one among many - believe Nabokov's *Lolita* to be one of the greatest novels of the twentieth century: indeed, one of the greatest novels ever written, but many others believed it to be virulently pornographic trash possessing the possibility of not just corrupting people's morals but of actually inciting criminal behaviour.

At the very least these examples illustrate the immensely broad range of reactions which either a novel or a film may provoke from critics, based not only upon their respective ideas concerning aesthetics but also their politics, their ethics and their metaphysics. However, it may also lead to the question of whether or not a general theory of adaptive, i.e., intertextual, studies may be achieved; André Bazin, concluded his groundbreaking 1948 essay 'Adaptation, or the Cinema as Digest' as follows:

...the (literary?) critic of the year 2050 would find not a novel out of which a play and a film had been "made," but rather a single work reflected through three art forms, an artistic pyramid with three sides, all equal in the eyes of the critic. The "work" would then be only an ideal point at the top of this figure, which itself is an ideal construct. The chronological precedence of one part over another would not be an aesthetic

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<sup>263</sup> Weldon, Fay, as quoted on the back cover of Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* Picador, London, 2000 (1991)

<sup>264</sup> Rosenblatt, Roger, 'Snuff This Book! Will Bret Easton Ellis Get Away with Murder?' *New York Times Book Review* 16<sup>th</sup> December, 1990 p.3

<sup>265</sup> Brooks, Jeffrey R., 'Stranger than Fiction: Historical "Truth" in Malamud's *The Fixer* and Samuel's *Blood Accusation*' Indiana University-Purdue University, 2002 p.129

criterion any more than the chronological precedence of one twin over the other is a genealogical one.<sup>266</sup>

This is certainly an intriguing idea, although perhaps rather idealistic: only time will tell whether Bazin's hypothesis will come to fruition, yet at this point it does not appear that critics – literary, cinematic, or otherwise – are heeding his advice. Clearly, intertextual studies is still bedevilled by its perennial Achilles' heel: the fidelity trap. For Bazin's words to ring true audiences, critics and theorists will have to be considerably less interested in what aspects of the precursor texts are included and omitted from adaptations, and instead analyse how the narrative is portrayed in a different medium. One means by which this could be at least partially achieved is by adhering to the idea, presented earlier in Bazin's essay, that, '...faithfulness to a form, literary or otherwise, is illusory: what matters is the *equivalence in meaning of the forms*.'<sup>267</sup> What I believe this to mean in practice is that audiences, critics and theorists should fundamentally ignore whether or not an adaptation is faithful in what George Bluestone refers to as a "Hollywood Aristotelian" sense, i.e., how closely the film follows the plot of the original novel, and instead focus upon how literary characters are transformed into cinematic characters and how literary language is transformed into cinematic language.

It is for this reason that I primarily focused upon these aspects of the adaptation process in my self-analysis of the screenplay fragment which I wrote. Like the adaptive films which I have studied in the course of this thesis, my adaptation of part of *Eleven A'Bier Place* is a transgeneric commentary. It is not a transposition in that it does not directly adapt all or most of the source text's content verbatim, while it is not an analogy in that it does not radically alter the source text's content either. The genuinely interesting question in the field of adaptation studies is not the *amount* of material which is or is not included in the adaptation from the original source text, but rather *how the material is translated* into the filmic medium. In most, if not in fact all, cases, those scenes from the literary text which are included are generally the passages which possess the greatest degree of cinematic potential, i.e., the passages which are the most *visually suggestive*. By this I mean passages which through its combination of literary features allow it to be translated into the cinematic

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<sup>266</sup> Bazin, André, 'Adaptation, or the Cinema as Digest' in *Esprit* 16, No. 146 July 1948 pp.32-40 reprinted in *Bazin at Work: Major Essays & Reviews from the Forties & Fifties* (trans. From the French by Alain Piette & Bert Cardullo) Routledge, New York p.50

<sup>267</sup> *ibid.* p.42

medium effectively. For example, long passages of literary dialogue may mean that it can be adapted into a play, but generally speaking cinematic dialogue should be relatively succinct; cinema audiences do not want to just stare at talking heads.

As Emily Zants writes in her essay ‘Introduction to Chaos Theory, Complexity, Cinema and the Evolution of the French Novel’,

Novels, and now cinema, use innumerable techniques or building blocks to communicate. But complex adaptive systems, which both man and art forms are, constantly revise and rearrange their building blocks as they gain credibility, that is, as they become familiar. Thus the history of a given form is to some extent that of the building blocks that have been used to generate it.<sup>268</sup>

This passage illustrates how there is no absolute criteria, and thus no absolute theory, of adaptive studies: it changes every time a successful and innovative new adaptation or theoretical work of adaptive studies is produced. In essence that is what makes adaptation studies so fascinating. There are dozens – perhaps even hundreds – of individual criteria which the intertextualist may utilise in order to examine the differences and similarities between a source text and its adaptation. It would be a difficult task for a single scholar to examine them all; thus, the impetus should be on all people studying adaptations to focus less upon the so-called “fidelity” of adaptations and more upon the remarkable range of differences and similarities between a source text and an adaptation. By this means it will become increasingly possible to understand fully what makes a successful – and an unsuccessful – adaptation. I have chosen to study adaptations in this thesis which I regard as being at least partially successful, but I have also attempted to examine aspects of the adaptations which either included unnecessary details or removed vital aspects of their precursor texts. I hope I have provided at least a modicum of objectivity in my analysis of the films and the novels from which they are derived.

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<sup>268</sup> Zants, Emily, ‘Introduction to Chaos Theory, Complexity, Cinema and the Evolution of the French Novel’ <http://www.ezdigitaldesign.com/pages/pages/chaos.html> (11.05.2009) p.14

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